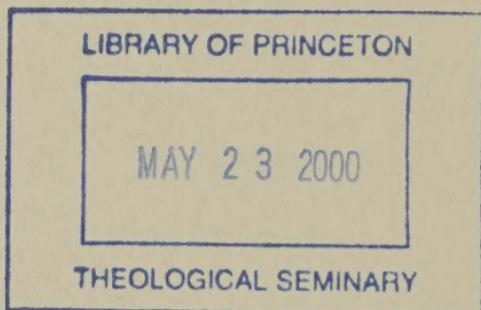




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To my friend John F. Patterson  
James H. Swanson.

Jan. 26, 1904.



SCENES AND SAYINGS  
IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST

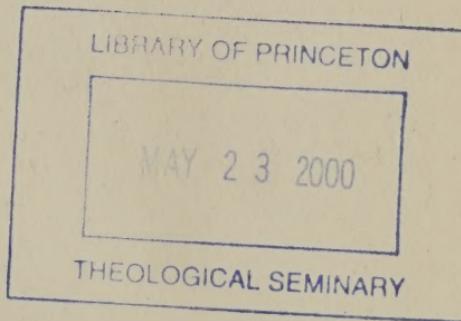


# Scenes and Sayings In the Life of Christ

By

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NEW YORK

CHICAGO

TORONTO

Fleming H. Revell Company

LONDON AND EDINBURGH

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**FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY**  
(November)

New York: 158 Fifth Avenue  
Chicago: 63 Washington Street  
Toronto: 27 Richmond Street, W  
London: 21 Paternoster Square  
Edinburgh: 30 St. Mary Street

## TO M. R. S

How strong our score of wedded years  
Has wrought our union, true and sweet?  
These fleeting days have been replete  
With purest joys, and few their tears.

Our work has been our common task;  
Our victories a common store;  
And which has helped the other more,  
We cannot know and do not ask.

Thy presence hath been unto me  
An inspiration passing wine;  
And as thy life hath mated mine,  
I dedicate this book to thee.

It is not woven of spun gold;  
No genius gilds a leaf or line;  
But it would serve Him who shall shine,  
When earth is dust and stars are cold.



## Preface

THESE chapters have appeared in *The Presbyterian Banner* as expositions of the International Sabbath-school Lessons, and the favor with which they were received and repeated requests for their publication in more permanent form have prompted this book. The work as originally prepared for the publishers contained more than a hundred chapters, forming a complete expository life of Christ. But as this would have required the work to be issued in two volumes, it was thought best to reduce it to its present size by a process of elimination. While this leaves many gaps in the narrative, yet the chapters still form a connected story, embracing the most important events in the Gospels, and in some degree fulfill the original desire to produce an expository life of our Lord for devotional reading. It is unnecessary to say that the work is not put forth as in any sense a historical and critical life of Christ. It has in view the more humble yet useful aim of an expository treatment of the chief scenes and sayings in the life of our Lord that will translate them into the circumstances and language of to-day and bring them home to our own business and bosoms. This practical aim explains the didactic style and direct address of the book. The great need of this age, as of every age, is to get the thoughts and the Spirit of Christ into our hearts and lives so that we shall know his will and be happy in doing it. It is hoped that readers will find this volume a help to this end.

*Washington, Pa.*

JAMES H. SNOWDEN.



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## THE ETERNAL WORD

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not. There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but *came* that he might bear witness of the light. There was the true light, *even the light* which lighteth every man, coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth—*John 1:1-14.*

**B**IOGRAPHY begins before birth. Heredity runs its roots back through the entire race, and a complete biography would open in Eden. Every line of study leads to remote origins. Science is largely a search for beginnings, seeking primal cells and shooting its imagination back to molten planets and fiery star-dust, and the supreme problem of philosophy is the First Cause. The Bible antedates all temporal origins in its sublime declaration, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

i. The story of this wonderful Life begins at the same

beginning. It leaps back of creation and there finds the Word. A word is the expression of the soul, or the soul in expression. The term (*logos*) was employed by the Greek philosophy to designate the rational principle or creative force of the world, deity expressing itself in creation. The word was thus already shaped to John's use and served his purpose of expressing God manifesting himself. Christ is the Word that reports God to us, as a word reports to us the soul of an orator; or as a word is a window through which we perceive the mind of another, so Christ is the great, splendid picture-window, glorious with the radiance of eternity, in which we see the image of God. It is true that Christ does not reveal all of God to us, for this were not possible: our finite minds could not take in his infinite fullness; our mortal vision could not bear the intolerable brightness of his presence. The most eloquent word cannot report the full depth and power of thought and feeling that surge through the orator's soul. The most magnificent picture-window cannot transmit to us all the stormy splendors that boil and foam and flash out of the sun: rather it can only let into our eyes a few gleams and tints of solar glory. So Christ can give us only glimpses and hints of God. Yet this revelation is true as far as it goes. Christ is not a caricature of God, but a true portrait: he that hath seen him hath seen the Father.

In this primal beginning the Word was. Christ himself did not begin to be in this beginning, however far back it may be traced, for he already was in existence. The eternity of the Word is here asserted. What, then, was the relation of this eternal Word to God? "The Word was with God." In the beginning God was not an absolutely single and solitary Being, but was an infinitely rich and complex personality. The trinity is here beginning to bud out of the mystery of the Godhead.

The relation of the Word to God is further expressed in the bold and startling statement that "the Word was God." The real divinity of Christ is here asserted in express terms. There is thus a distinction in the Godhead of God and the Word, and yet these two in a deeper sense are one God. This complex constitution of the Godhead is further unfolded in Scripture into a threefold distinction of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Such a personality is to us a mystery, and yet it is faintly reflected in our own complex personality in which one spiritual nature manifests itself in thought, sensibility and will. The first sentence of John's gospel, like the first sentence of Genesis, is thus a tremendous and sublime utterance, exalting Christ into equality with God and crowning him with eternal glory.

2. Having told us what the Word was, John next tells us what he did. "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made." This announcement puts no undue strain upon our faith after we have accepted the first declaration. This great deed simply matches the Word and is the proper exercise of his power. As the Word is the manifestation or expression of God, all the purposes of God are executed through him. "There is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and we through him." The eternal Christ, or the eternal God in Christ, is thus the creator of the universe. All the stars are, so to speak, condensations of his fiery breath, everything that the microscope or telescope reveals has felt the finishing touch of his hand, all the intelligence manifested in the universe is his thought. The eternal Word spoke, and his words became congealed and crystallized into worlds. Science is a search into his mind. The universe is a mighty mirror in which we see

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reflected the power and wisdom and beauty of our Lord. It pours a richer meaning into the world, it puts new splendor on the very grass, when we view nature as the work of the eternal Christ and remember that everything that we see and use has been shaped by his hand. The creative energy in the Word was not mere blind power, but it was life and was the source of life in all living creatures. The life that breaks into infinitely varied forms and manifests itself in root and leaf and flower, in claw and tooth and wing, in eye and brain, that mantles the earth with verdure and crowds it with joyous creatures, all germinates and blossoms out of the infinite life of the eternal Word. This life creeps up into men and bursts into light, intellectual and moral life, reason and conscience. Every human soul is a tiny tendril from the life of the Word. All the light of reason and conscience that shines in the world comes from the Sun of Righteousness. Every truth is but a splinter from his mind; every virtue is but a gleam of his glory. This light has ever shined in the darkness of human ignorance and sin, striving to burn it away with its brightness, but the darkness has ever failed and refused to receive it. Earth is a tremendous battle-field on which two kingdoms of light and darkness meet in terrific shock and strife.

3. There is a sudden change in the point of view, and the writer introduces a man sent from God, whose name was John. The plan of redemption cannot proceed far without linking human agency into its divine processes: God must have man. Every man is sent from God on a mission, and his business is to find this mission and do it with his might. John came as a witness to bear witness of the Light; he was not the Light, but only a reflector of the Light. The sun must have the moon to throw its light upon us by night; and even to light us by day it must have the help of millions of dust particles in the air

that bend and shoot its beams in all directions. John was such a human particle reflecting the glory of the divine Word. How useful and beautiful he was in his place, how gloriously he shines as a light-reflector; but how quickly would he have paled had he posed as a light-giver? The moon is beautiful in its orbit, but let it not try to wheel into the central place and shine by its own light; much less the mote that sparkles in the sunbeam. John knew his bounds and ever kept in his orbit around the Sun of Righteousness. Our mission is to float in the glory of Christ and reflect it through the world. We shall shine resplendent as long as we revolve around him, but we shall lose our usefulness and beauty if we drift away from his presence. John bore witness of the light that all men through him might believe: he shone, not to attract attention to himself, but to draw the gaze and the faith of men to Christ. So are we to live that men, seeing our good works, will forget us and see the beauty and feel the attraction of the Lord Jesus.

4. How was the Word, thus made known by the witness of John and of all his disciples, received? "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own and his own received him not." More profoundly pathetic words never were written. The Word found no welcome in his own world; the creature did not recognize the Creator; the children had no joyous greeting for the Father, but shut the door against him! The Lord Jesus walked this world that he had fashioned into form, he sat wearied and thirsty by the water that had fallen as a drop out of his eternal hand, he looked into the faces of his own people of whom he had been born, who had been trained for ages to receive him, and nowhere did he meet with kindly recognition and reception; everywhere he met with refusal and rebellion and at last with death. Was

not this a tragedy beyond human conception? And still he is ever coming unto his own and yearning and striving to woo and win his children unto himself, and still he meets with repulse and rejection. Not from all, however. The world was not solid in its rejection of Jesus Christ. Barabbas got more votes, but Christ got some. He came to a world where he was not wanted and there was no room for him in the inn, but there was room for him in the manger. Shepherds found him and wise men worshipped him, an increasing circle of disciples grew around him, at length multitudes followed him, and as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become the sons of God. The Son of God begets sons of God: this is in accordance with strictest science and law. This process is now peopling the world with a new race, and all those that receive the Spirit of the Son are born into the family of God.

5. John again turns to the mystery of the incarnation and gives a closer view of it. "The Word became flesh": eternal Spirit and human flesh were fused into one personality—this mystery we can never fathom, any more than we can fathom the union of our own spirit and flesh. The incarnate Word "dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth." John here touches the solid ground of his own sight and experience. He himself saw the splendor of the incarnate life of the Son of God and knew whereof he spoke. The glory of this life is still shining for us, and, if our eyes are opened, we shall see its beauty and be transformed and transfigured by it into its heavenly image.

## II

### A HOLY MYSTERY REVEALED

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord *is* with thee. But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this might be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. And Mary said unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also that which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elisabeth thy kinswoman, she also hath conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her that was called barren. For no word from God shall be void of power. And Mary said, Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.—*Luke 1: 26-38.*

AS the opening acts of a drama shift rapidly from point to point, so the early scenes of this story occur in quick succession at widely separated places. Angels seem to have been swiftly flitting up and down through Judea and Galilee, bearing messages to the chief characters in the opening scenes of redemption. The whole land was alive with the divine presence, and Jerusalem and Nazareth and Bethlehem were luminous points that attracted the celestial visitants.

1. After the angelic announcement to Zacharias, the

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next announcement was made to the Virgin Mary. Nothing is known of her family and previous history; but no queen or empress born to royal power and splendor, no woman of genius crowned with fame, was ever so highly favored as this Jewish peasant girl. "Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee." She was picked out of the countless millions of her race and sex for this transcendent honor that has made her conspicuous through all succeeding time. "Blessed art thou among women." This gave her a place of reverence in the affections of the early Christians that gradually grew to a divine rank. Imagination clothed Mary with the majesty of the mother of God. In early Christian art she at first sits below her Son, then she sits on a level with him, and finally she sits above him. Prayer was offered to her, and at last she was worshipped. This Mariolatry was one of the causes of the Reformation and is still conspicuous in the Roman Catholic Church. The root of this huge error is doubtless the desire to find a divine incarnation of feminine graces—a desire that finds its true satisfaction in Jesus, who combines a womanly heart with a manly brain and is as tender and beautiful in feminine graces as he is strong and noble in masculine virtues. While she was only human and it is idolatry to worship her, yet we should ever hold in peculiar reverence the mother of our Lord. Mary was highly favored because the Lord was with her. Here is a channel of divine favor that is open to us all. Her unique crown is not for us, many a coveted ambition is forbidden us, but the loving kindness of the Lord is an unrestricted favor, and from him we may receive the crown of life.

2. This strange announcement troubled the simple wondering girl, and she cast in her mind what manner of salutation this might be. Fear shadowed all these angelic announcements. Sin has thrown us out of fine

harmony with the spiritual and unseen, so that the other world cannot closely approach this world without causing it some perturbation. Yet Mary's anxiety was partly caused by her desire to understand the meaning of the message. It was as yet veiled in mystery, and she stood before it in trembling expectancy. This was a better state of mind than premature elation. We should never catch up a message and rush with it out into the world until we have meditated upon it and mastered it. The world has been much troubled with messages that have been vociferously proclaimed to it before they were thought through and wrought out into the consistency and power of truth. It is better for us to tremble before a heavenly message with anxiety and responsibility than to go into raptures or be filled with pride. The angel quieted the troubled maiden with the assurance, "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God." How many of our fears are unfounded! All our fears that grow out of God's approach and speech to us are false. He is not our enemy, but our friend, and all his messages are truth and love. The call to duty, or to great privilege or power, may at first cause us to tremble with anxiety, but the assurance that we have found favor with God should scatter our fears and make us strong with his strength.

3. When we listen to hear what this great honor was that was to be bestowed upon the virgin, we may be surprised that it simply turns out to be motherhood, a unique and exalted motherhood it is true, and yet motherhood. Were we expecting some jewelled crown to be placed upon her brow, or some empurpled robe to be thrown around her? Were we thinking of some glorious achievement in the world of art or song? Thus are we ever applying material and worldly standards and missing true greatness. Is not motherhood woman's

highest mission and her truest crown? She stands in this creative and formative relation to the race, and this is a function and responsibility and honor that she should faithfully fulfill and jealously guard. More than any other, her hand shapes the coming generation and creates the future. The mother of a good man ought to be honored almost equally with the man himself. Whenever a man achieves greatness, the world immediately begins to look for his mother, and it generally finds in her the secret of his power. As some one has said, "When God is about to make a great man, he first makes a great woman." Motherhood was highly prized and honored among the Jews, and Mary would not be disappointed at this announcement: especially this motherhood—the motherhood of the Messiah. Such an honor had been the passionate hope of Jewish mothers for many generations, and at last it fell upon this humble, modest maiden. The name of the Messiah was now revealed; an angel first whispered the name that is now above every name,—Jesus, Jehoshua, Jehovah is Salvation. What manner of man was this son to be? Simply another name added to the roll of the world's great teachers or artists or warriors? another star blazing out in the firmament of human genius? No, this son was outlined in a prophetic sketch that swept beyond human proportions and powers into divine rank and relations. "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Little could this Jewish maiden grasp the real meaning of this announcement; probably she could only catch at some of its material images and missed its spiritual significance and splendor. God is always promising us better things than we think.

4. The virgin was now thrown into a new perplexity. "How shall this be," she said, "seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also that which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God." The initial miracle of the Gospel is here announced, and it has ever encountered special opposition. Our belief in the continuity of nature has grown increasingly strong in modern times, and many find it hard to believe that it ever could have been ruptured at the point of birth. There is, however, no peculiar difficulty in this miracle, and the same arguments that would erase it would equally obliterate all miracles from the gospel narrative. It is definitely declared in the gospels, and has on it imitable marks of fact and none of the marks of fiction. It is not an isolated and irrational wonder, but an harmonious and logical part of the system of redemption. It fits in with and carries out the personal preexistence of the Son of God, and thus differentiates his Incarnation from an ordinary human birth; it is one of the conditions of the sinlessness of Jesus; and it marks the point of departure for a new species of humanity, the second Adam by whose obedience many shall be made righteous. The Son of God was severed from the ordinary generation of men both in his entrance into and in his departure from this world. The Virgin Birth and the Resurrection are the buttresses on which the arch of the Divinity of Christ rests. We accept this holy mystery and believe that the birth of Jesus was unique and ushered a new Man, even the Son of God, into the world.

5. The virgin now accepted this divine appointment in a beautiful spirit of humility and obedience. "And Mary said, Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." There was a mystery before her

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that she could only dimly discern, but she put herself wholly at the disposal of the Lord that he might do with her as he would. Here was the germ of that unquestioning obedience that came to its full flower when at the wedding in Cana she said, "Whosoever he saith unto you, do it." Was not this obedience of the mother a human root of that divine obedience in the Son that blossomed out into his perfect and glorious life of service and sacrifice? Will a disobedient mother likely have an obedient son? Since the mother has so potent a hand in making the child she must herself be strong in faith and faithfulness if she would weave these strands into its character and conduct. Submission to the will of the Lord has been a masterly element in many a mother that has made many a mighty son. The mother that lets the Lord shape her life at his will is thereby the more able to shape her child's life at her will. Trustful obedience is the root of every good and great life. When the message was brought to Victoria that she was Queen of England, "I will be good," she said, and went to her great destiny. That resolution was a root of faith and faithfulness in her heart that bore the fruit of her splendid reign. The Lord is ever sending us messages and laying upon us burdens, sometimes of service and joy, and sometimes of mystery and sorrow, and we shall each one find the path of safety and success, of confidence and comfort, in the faith that says: Behold, the servant of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.

### III

## THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Now it came to pass in those days, there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrolment made when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to enrol themselves, every one to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David; to enrol himself with Mary, who was betrothed to him, being great with child. And it came to pass, while they were there, the **days** were fulfilled that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son; and she wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.—*Luke 2: 1-7.*

“O little town of Bethlehem,  
How still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep,  
The silent stars go by;  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
The everlasting Light;  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
Are met in thee to-night.”

—*Phillips Brooks.*

HERE is the pivotal point of history, the event from which all our events are dated. The most wonderful fact in the morning newspaper is the date that connects it with the birth of Jesus Christ. A wide circle of causes converged towards this event; all the spokes in the great wheel of the world ran into this hub. Jewish history for centuries headed towards this culmination; this was the matchless blossom that bloomed out of all that growth from Abraham through David to Joseph. Prophecy and psalm and altar and temple were

so many roots in the tree that was to bear this fruit. Pagan history, also, the wisdom of Greece and the power of Rome, were roots to this same tree. God set this event in a mighty framework of preparation. And the consequents of this birth have been worthy of its antecedents, this event is the radiant point of the modern world, its seed is now blooming on every shore. Yet the simplicity with which it is told is one of the literary marvels of the gospels. This event has inspired poets and painters and has been embroidered and illuminated with an immense amount of ornamentation. Genius has poured its splendors upon it and tried to give us some worthy conception of the scene. But the evangelists had no such purpose, and their story is told with that charming artlessness that is perfect art. No attempt at rhetoric disfigures the record, not a word in it is written for effect, but the simple facts are allowed to tell their own eloquent and marvellous tale. The inspired writers mixed no imagination with their verities, for they had no other motive than to tell the plain truth: and this gives us confidence in the trustworthiness of their narrative.

1. "Now it came to pass in those days, there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be enrolled." This is the point at which the orderly and scholarly Luke opens his account of the birth of our Lord. It seems like going a long way off from and around to the end in view. But near events often have remote causes, and all things work together. When we see providence start in we never can tell where it is going to come out. If God is about to bless us, he may start the chain of causation that shall at length reach us in some far-off land; or if he is about to save a soul in China, he may start with one of us in the contribution we make to foreign missions. Cæsar Augustus, master of the world, from time to time ordered a census to be taken of the

empire that he might know its resources and reap from it the richest harvest of taxes. It was probably between the months of December and March, B. C. 5-4, that such a census was being taken in the province of Syria.

2. In accordance with ancient Jewish usage, all citizens repaired to the tribe and village from which they were descended, and were there enrolled. In the town of Nazareth in the north lived Joseph, a carpenter, and Mary, his espoused wife, who though a virgin was great with child, having been overshadowed by the Holy Spirit and the mystery having been revealed to her and her betrothed husband. They were both descended from the royal line of David, and therefore to Bethlehem they must go. With us such a journey of eighty miles would mean no more than stepping on a railway car at nine o'clock in the morning and stepping off at noon. But with them it meant a toilsome journey on foot of several days. Slowly they wended their way southward, led on by the irresistible hand of Cæsar, far away on his throne. Centuries before this a prophet had put his finger on Bethlehem and prophesied (Micah 5:2) that though it was little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of it should come forth one that should be a ruler in Israel. Ancient Hebrew prophecy and Roman imperial decree thus marvellously fitted each other and worked together. Mary must have known this prophecy, and we know not with what a sense of mystery and fear and joy she drew near to the predicted place where the Messiah was to be born.

3. Bethlehem is six miles south of Jerusalem on the crown of a steep ledge of rock, or spur of the mountain, jutting out to the east from the central range. Up this rocky road climbed the humble carpenter and his espoused wife and passed through the gate into the village. When they came to the inn, it was already crowded with visitors driven thither by the decree of Cæsar that had set all Pal-

estine in commotion. In connection with the inn, generally the central space of its four-square inclosure, but probably in this case a cave in the limestone rock, was a stable, or place for the camels and horses and cattle of the guests. Among these oriental people it was (and is) no uncommon thing for travellers, when all the chambers of the inn were occupied, to make a bed of straw and spend the night in this place. In this stable, probably in the very cave over which now stands the Church of the Nativity, Mary and Joseph found lodging for the night. It was not a mark of degradation for them to do this, though it was an indication of their poverty, as wealthy visitors would doubtless have found better accommodations.

4. In that cave Mary brought forth her first-born son; and as there was no woman's hand there to minister for her, she herself wrapped the new-born babe in swaddling clothes; and as there was no other cradle or bed to receive it, she laid the child in the trough from which the camels were fed. This is all we know of what took place in that cave on that memorable night from which the history of the Christian world is now dated. The apocryphal gospels, legends that afterwards grew up, fill the chamber with supernal light so that visitors had to shade their eyes from the splendor of the child; and the painters portray the holy child and mother with halos of glory around their heads. But this is all imagination and myth. Jesus was born as other human beings are born and looked just like a human child. No one seeing him could have guessed that a unique birth had ruptured the continuity of nature and brought a divine Man into the world. There was no glory streaming from his person, and no spectacular display such as attended the birth of a Cæsar. The Son of Man did not come with observation, but stole into the world silently and unseen. If we could have gazed in upon the Christ-child as it lay in its

manger, we would have been disappointed and thought that nothing extraordinary could come of it. But great events rarely seem great at the time. Outward size and circumstance do not measure inward power and possibility. God brought only a child into the world on that night, but in that Child were sheathed omnipotent power and wisdom and mercy to save the world. All the countless blades of grass on the planet have come from one tiny seed, and all the saved souls on earth and all the redeemed in heaven shall come from this Child.

5. "There was no room for them in the inn." And so Jesus came to a world where he was not wanted. After all this preparation through long centuries for his coming, after all these types and prophecies, sacrifices and symbols, after all this weary waiting and passionate hope and all these golden dreams, when the promised One came there was no room for him and he was not wanted! He came unto his own, and his own received him not! Was there ever a greater and sadder anti-climax and a more cruel disappointment? Let us admit that there may have been no fault in this matter, no lack of hospitality in the keeper or the guests of the inn, as the village was overcrowded, and the fact that these late arrivals were compelled to put up with a place out in the enclosure, possibly a cave, where the animals were kept, was no incivility or uncommon hardship. Nevertheless, whatever may have been the reason, the fact was that there was no room for Jesus in that inn the first night he spent in this world, and this fact is illustrative of his reception in the world he came to save. There were few places where he did find welcome: generally there was no room for him even in places where he had the most right to expect it. And if it was no lack of hospitality that kept him out of this inn, it certainly was the lack of hospitality and the positive presence of hostility that

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excluded him from many other places where he wanted to be. Jesus was not wanted in his own country: Herod tried to leave no room for him there. He was not wanted in his own town: his neighbors tried to hurl him down a cliff to his death. He was not wanted in his own church: its ministers and doctors of divinity fell upon him in malignant fury and at last crucified him. Small room was there in this evil world for his pure and lowly spirit. Then why did he come to it? Because he so loved it that he gave himself for it. Small room do we still leave for Jesus as we crowd him out of our hearts and lives with our selfishness and worldliness. Is it a discouraging fact that there is so little room for Christ in the world? Then let us note the fact that there is more room for him to-day than ever before, and this room is ever widening. How much that inn missed by not having room for this mother and her babe! Its finest apartment lost a glory that fell upon the manger out of which the cattle were fed. How much shall we miss if we do not have room for Christ? There is one world where there is room for Jesus and where he is wanted: heaven! And all who are like him shall find room with him in its many mansions.

## IV

### ANGELS AND SHEPHERDS

And there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock. And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them : and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid ; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people : for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this *is* the sign unto you ; Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

Glory to God in the highest,  
And on earth peace among men in whom he is  
well pleased.

And it came to pass, when the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found both Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger. And when they saw it, they made known concerning the saying which was spoken to them about this child.—*Luke 2:8-17.*

**E**ARTH was unconscious of this divine birth, but heaven knew it. There was holy ecstasy in all the shining ranks above, and “angels seem, as birds when new-come in spring, to have flown hither and thither, in songful mood, dipping their white wings into our atmosphere, just touching the earth or glancing along its surface, as sea birds skim the surface of the sea.” Around all the events preceding and attending the birth of Christ are the quiver and flash of angel wings. They announce to Zacharias the birth of John the Baptist.

They find Mary, the virgin mother, as a beam of morning light finds a white-leaved flower, and reveal the mystery that is come upon her. No sooner is the infant Jesus laid in his manger than the door of heaven opens and there comes trooping forth a radiant throng, filling the midnight sky with splendor, and the glad tidings are proclaimed to earth amid a shower of song from the heavenly choir. It was meet that the first visitors to Bethlehem should come trailing glory from heaven, for the infant Jesus was himself a child of heaven, untouched with earth's sin and wearing the beauty of God. The story of the birth of Jesus would lose much of its music and charm if it were stripped of its angel ministration. We know not in what strange ways we are ministered to by invisible hands. There may be a rush of angel wings to the cradle of every new-born child. They pitch their tents around us in the viewless fields of air. The spirit messengers that sped to and fro between heaven and earth on the first Christmas morning still desire to look into the wonders of earth's redemption and wait on us.

1. The Christ-child was born, and now the problem was to get the news out into the world. An angel had come from heaven to announce the great event to earth. Where shall he begin—what human ears shall first hear the wondrous tidings? Let him go to Jerusalem, we would have said, and call upon the High Priest and first take him into his confidence, and then let him go to the Temple and stand amidst the splendors of that holy sanctuary and announce to the assembled priests and scribes that prophecy was fulfilled and their long-expected Messiah had come. Shall not some respect be paid to official places and persons? Has not God ordained priests and presbyters through whom he dispenses his grace and administers his kingdom? Yet his-

tory witnesses that at times few men stand in God's way more than ecclesiastics. They are rarely the men that hear a new message: God must usually tell it to some one else first. One of the most startling things in the Bible is the fact that the announcement of Christ's birth was made, not to priests, but to shepherds. The gospel was first preached, not in a church, but in a pasture field where there were more sheep than men to hear. What a rebuke and warning is this to our ministerial pretension and pride! God can easily dispense with us, and may pass us by to speak to some humbler soul. The great people up in the Temple have no monopoly of his grace, and it may break out in some wholly unexpected place. The gospel is no respecter of places and persons. It may be preached in a costly church or a stately cathedral, but it is equally at home in a country schoolhouse, or in a sheep pasture. In simplicity and catholicity it is adapted to all classes and conditions of life. It has the same message for priest and people, prince and peasant, scholar and shepherd, and all receive from it an equal welcome and an equal blessing.

2. On the night of the Nativity these shepherds were in the field keeping watch over their flocks, for those engaged in the lowliest duties may receive a splendid visitation from heaven. The sheep lay like drifted snow on the ridges, all things around them were wrapped in slumber and silence, and the shepherds had no premonition that the great event for which the ages had grown into readiness was near. Suddenly a mysterious visitor stood by them and an unearthly glory shone around them as though the splendor of heaven were pouring down through the rent sky. The simple-minded shepherds were sore afraid, as wiser people would have been. Sin has wrought such disorder that the thought of spirit visitors frightens us and heaven must not come too near.

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"Be not afraid," was the first word of the angel. Sin has sown such fear in the world that our Heavenly Father himself cannot get near us, even to rescue us, without calling out as he approaches, Be not afraid! There are great reasons for fear in this darkened world, but the gospel is not one of them. Its only mission is to release us from the bondage of death and fill us with that perfect love that casts out fear. Its message is good tidings of great joy to all people. Amidst all the sadness and tears of the world it has something to tell that brings joy, and its blessing is confined to no continent, class, or sect, but its only boundary is the rim of the planet. What can fulfill so great a promise? "There is born to you a Saviour." Does this fulfillment fall below our expectation? Were we rather looking for some material blessing, richer harvests and finer houses, that would increase the wealth and comfort of the world? We were looking in the wrong direction and missed the world's true need. Sin is the root of all our troubles, and nothing else can do us so much good as a Saviour who can bring us pardon, purity, peace, and power. God made no mistake in his Christmas gift, and gave us the greatest possible blessing when he gave us Christ.

3. Definite directions were given for finding the newborn Saviour. In the city of David the shepherds would find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. The angelic message was not simply a song in the air, a halo of heavenly light, a fading vision, but it bound itself down to definite places and circumstances and left something solid. Christianity is historical and roots itself in reality. It is not a beautiful legend or myth, but it fits itself into the rigid framework of history and gives names and places. It was not done in a corner and is not afraid of facts. The babe was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. Jesus was a true human

child and took upon him our form down to his infant clothes. We might have expected that he would have been laid on softest down and covered with silken robes, but the Saviour of the world did not separate himself from common humanity by any mark of distinction. He was closer to the great heart of the world in that manger than he would have been up in a palace. The Christ is a great wonder in his divine personality, but we can understand his swaddling clothes. Christianity is not all mystery, but it also comes down close around us and embodies itself in many plain facts and duties. "Ye shall find a babe." The shepherds were not left to wander around in uncertainty, but were sent direct to the place. Christ is not hidden from us, clear directions point out the place where he is, and every soul that seeks him shall find him.

4. The announcement of the angel was accompanied with a chorus of heavenly voices that broke from the gallery of the sky. A shower of song fell upon the rude shepherds. Kings and artists never heard such a concert, yet it was rendered in a sheep pasture. Angels do not ask for cultivated hearers: they will sing for anybody. Heaven's best gifts are open to all without money and without price. The angels' chorus is a broad interpretation of the meaning of Christ's birth. It first ascribes glory to God. The gift of Christ manifests the glory of God in that it displays the divine wisdom in devising a plan of salvation, the divine power in executing it, and the divine love that is its mighty motive. The glory of God that streams through the heavens as through a dome of glass is concentrated and burns with the intensest splendor in the person of his Son. He that hath seen him hath seen the Father. The chorus next pronounces peace upon men. The gospel brings peace when it brings pardon and purity. Sin is the root of all unrest, discord and strife. Having set us at war with

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God, it then sets us at war with one another and with ourselves. Bring us into harmony with God, and then around our restlessness will flow his rest. Wash our hearts clean and out of them will issue no bitter stream. Cut off the source of strife in the heart and all the strifes in the world will cease. Thus the incarnation of Christ is a Jacob's ladder that stretches from earth to heaven and connects the glory of God with the peace of men. The glory of God and the peace of men are never in antagonism, but are always complementary and harmonious, they are the two ends of the same gospel, two parts of the same song. They cannot be separated and must go together; if we have the one we shall have the other; in glorifying God we work peace among men, and in working peace among men we glorify God.

5. The song died away in the solemn silence and the shepherds were left alone. It was a critical hour with them. Shall they follow this vision, or shall they let it vanish with the last echo of the song and relapse into the old dull routine? No, they did not let it pass and life was never the same to them again. "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is to come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us." They translated message into action and presently were climbing the rocky slope to Bethlehem. They were not content simply to hear of so great a wonder, but were bent upon seeing it; they assuredly gathered that the Lord had made known that thing unto them for a purpose which called for action and obedience. Had these shepherds not followed up the message, their knowledge of their Messiah would have stopped right there. We hear divine messages and see heavenly visions enough, but too often we let them fade into forgetfulness and pass into nothingness. A message does us no good until it becomes action, the grandest vision that ever swept

through our brain or illuminated our sky leaves no vestige of worth unless it is turned into conduct and character. Many hear of Christ that do not see Christ. "Let us now go and see this thing." We do not know Christ until we come into personal contact with and see him as our Saviour. Seeing is believing, this is the simplicity of faith, and when we see Christ through the gaze of obedience we shall be transfigured into his likeness.

6. Promise was exactly matched with fulfillment. "Ye shall find a babe," was the promise of the angel, and now the record reads, "And they came with haste and found the babe." Where did God ever lead us to expect anything and then disappoint us? He gave us thirst that urges us to find water, and matching this need he has created refreshing springs and sparkling streams. He gave us hunger that seeks for bread, and it finds field and orchard and vine that meet and satisfy its need. He gave us minds that seek truth, and they find it; he gave us craving for love, and heart matches heart. He set eternity in our hearts and gave us instincts that reach after the Infinite; hearts that cry, Shew us the Father and it sufficeth us. Shall all lower needs be satisfied, and this supreme search and cry of the soul be disappointed and mocked? Is not this instinctive craving for God a virtual promise that he will reveal himself and shall be found? "And they found the babe," is the answer to this promise. God sends us with all our deep cravings and mysterious longings to that cradle in Bethlehem, where they will be exactly and fully matched and satisfied. He that hath seen that Child hath seen the Father. "Seek and ye shall find," is Christ's own promise. There is room around him for us all; there is fullness in him to satisfy all our need, and no one seeking him sincerely shall fail to find him, or shall be turned empty away. The shepherds, having seen for themselves, immediately

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began to make known abroad the saying which was told them concerning the Child. The gospel is expansive and cannot be shut up in the heart. We no sooner receive than we must begin to give it. The more we make it known abroad, the more it grows in our own hearts. Let us now go unto Bethlehem while the song is in the air and see this thing which is come to pass, and we shall return glorifying and praising God.

## V

## THE BOYHOOD OF JESUS

And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. And his parents went every year to Jerusalem at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up after the custom of the feast; and when they had fulfilled the days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem ; and his parents knew it not; but supposing him to be in the company, they went a day's journey; and they sought for him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance : and when they found him not, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking for him. And it came to pass, after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions: and all that heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when they saw him, they were astonished: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and he was subject unto them: and his mother kept all *these* sayings in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.—*Luke 2: 40-52.*

**T**WO or three brief descriptive verses and one anecdote tell us all we know of the boyhood of Jesus. We would like to know more: for we are interested in the childhood of great men. We are curious to see whether the stamp of greatness was on them from the beginning, or whether at first they were undistinguishable from other children. Sometimes genius buds in childhood, as in Mozart and Macaulay, but in other cases it sleeps and is unsuspected for many years. It lies like an explosive in the brain until some match of

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circumstance touches it off, or like a seed which must wait for its summer. Precocity is not always a favorable sign, and is often followed by arrested development. We wonder what may have been the boyhood of Jesus and long for a peep behind the veil. As usual the apocryphal gospels are most voluble where the inspired gospels are most reticent. They fill the childhood of Jesus with marvels and miracles that are irrational and silly. The broad difference between the books that were put in and the books that were kept out of the Bible is one of the wonders and proofs of inspiration. The gospels hide the youth of Jesus from our view, giving us only these few verses as a hint of what lies behind the scene. Jesus grew in secret and did not come forth before the world until he was ready for his work.

But while the gospels maintain an impressive silence, yet we know more than they tell us and have considerable general knowledge of the childhood of Jesus. We know that he was a true human child and grew up through the stages and experiences of human life. He nestled and cooed and smiled in his mother's arms. His "baby hand was pressed against the circle of the breast." He was lulled to sleep with a cradle song. He took his first tottering steps and invented his first childish words. He played in his father's carpenter shop and went to the village school. There were brothers in the home, and he grew up with them. He associated with the boys of Nazareth and was full of play. We draw the line at any wrong act or thought. He was human, yet he was sinless. But he was not a grown-up boy, such as we used to find in the Sunday-school books, old beyond his years, morbidly self-conscious and pious; but a genuine boy, artless, inquiring, spirited, with his whole nature in free and healthy play. The whole charm of his boyhood lies in the fact that he was a boy and not something else.

1. The child grew. Growth is the law of all greatness. The mountains are pushed up an inch at a time, and the tree adds cell to cell. Human life begins in unconscious infancy and must slowly increase in body and mind up to manhood. Jesus obeyed this law. He did not come as a full-grown man or as a precocious, preternatural child, but as an unconscious infant, and then he grew. He was subject to all the laws of physical and mental growth. In the home and carpenter shop, in the school and synagogue, he grew day by day, lesson by lesson, and increased in stature and wisdom. He was not crowded forward and overtaxed in his work and growth, but grew slowly and solidly. He took things as they came in their proper order, and was not in a hurry. Thirty years he grew in seclusion before he came forth strong to do his work. He got ready before he began. Children are often hurried forward too fast and pushed into publicity too soon. Parents are ambitious to have their children show signs of brightness and surpass other children, and they crowd them forward, and often they irreparably injure them and sometimes they kill them. It is pitiful to see children, through hot-house education or through dress and fashion, despoiled of their youth and made old beyond their years. Let them grow and take things as they come; they will be young men and women soon enough. Do not thrust them into the excitement and glare of the world, but keep them in seclusion and let them quietly increase in stature and wax strong in spirit, as Jesus did, until their time has come.

2. The single recorded incident in the boyhood of Jesus is "a solitary floweret out of the wonderful enclosed garden of thirty years." It occurred when he was twelve years of age. This was a critical age and turning-point in the life of a Jewish boy. At this age he was obliged to learn a trade for his own support; he began to

wear the phylacteries; and he became "a son of the law" and was in some degree released from parental authority. At this age the Jewish boy began to act upon his own responsibility and to take care of himself, and this fact throws light upon this incident. Every year the parents of Jesus went to the feast of the Passover, the great religious festival and holiday of the Jews. Jesus had now reached the age when he was under obligation to go with them. Probably for the first time he stepped out of the seclusion of Nazareth into the publicity of the metropolis. It must have been with emotions of deep wonder and reverence and joy that he entered the holy city and witnessed its scenes and shared in the services of the temple. He had a boy's interest and delight in the sights of the city, but the centre of interest for him was his Father's house. While at the feast the boy became separated from his parents, and they started home without him, supposing that he was in the caravan with friends—a not unlikely or unusual occurrence. As he did not appear at the end of the first day's journey, however, they became solicitous and then alarmed and started back to Jerusalem to find him. On the third day they found him in the Temple in the midst of the Rabbis, hearing them and asking them questions, and displaying such wisdom that all were amazed. It is a critical hour with a youth when he enters a great city and is left there to himself. Its attractions open before his feet many an alluring path to ruin. Jesus was susceptible to these temptations, but his religious instinct drew him to his Father's house. He did not leave his religion in the village home when he went to the city. The youth that is true to God in the city is safe. This scene in the boyhood of Jesus has sometimes been despoiled of its truth and beauty by making it out that he was instructing these Rabbis and showing off his superior wisdom. On

the contrary, he was hearing them and asking them questions; he was not instructor, but scholar. Jesus never played the part of a smart boy, but was modest and teachable and kept his place in the presence of superiors; and it was his rare spirit of wisdom and candor that excited the admiration of those that heard him. A teachable spirit is a beautiful thing in a child, and it is just as beautiful in mid-life and in old age. It is one of the primary elements of Christian character and of all greatness.

3. The parents were astonished—struck with admiration, as the strong Greek word means—at the scene. Parents are proverbially pleased with and proud of signs of promise in their children, and Mary and Joseph experienced this delight in a rare degree as the religious genius of Jesus began to flash out. Yet there was also an ominous element in the situation which drew from the anxious mother the chiding question, “Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?” She realized that the lines of parental influence were slipping from her hands, and that henceforth she could control her boy less and less and he would act for himself more and more. That was a painful moment for Mary, and it is a painful moment for every father and mother when they see their children beginning to separate themselves and assert their own individuality and responsibility. But this is necessary and best for children. Ripened seeds must drop off the tree, or there could be no more trees. Mary’s question elicited from Jesus his first recorded utterance: “How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be in my Father’s house?” This reply is the kernel of this anecdote, the vital germ that kept it alive and caused it to blossom out in the gospel. It expresses surprise in the mind of Jesus that his parents did not know that the attractions of the temple had kept him and that there was

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his proper place and chief business. We are here brought to the edge of the question, How early did Jesus become conscious of his divinity and his mission as the Messiah? Into this mystery we cannot penetrate, but at twelve years of age he had firmly grasped the deepest purpose of life. Already his life was perfectly set to the music of his Father's will. Life with him was not idleness, or wealth, or pleasure, but service in his Father's house. Many people waste a good portion of life in finding out what they are here for, and some die without ever knowing why they were born. Young people should discover as early as they can what their mission in life is, and they should know in their childhood that this mission is not mere pleasure-seeking, or money-making, but is the Father's business. The parents of Jesus understood not his first recorded utterance—a sad commentary and mournful prophecy. How often has he been misunderstood and misrepresented so that his light has been turned into darkness? He was in the world and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. And still the world misunderstands him, and very imperfectly do the clearest Christian minds penetrate into the depth and power of his meaning. His simple words are larger than our largest thoughts of life and love.

4. "And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them:" a wonderful record is this of the Son of God. Subject unto them: received instruction and guidance from them and yielded obedience to them. This relation of course had in it no element of severity and bondage. There were no unreasonable, harsh restraints on the one side, and no wilfullness and waywardness on the other. Obedience was the disposition and habit and joy of Jesus. He kept the fifth commandment and so increased in favor with God

and men. This was the beginning of that path of obedience that led him all the way through the temptation past the cross up to the throne. Had he begun by disobeying his earthly father, he would have ended by disobeying his heavenly Father. Obedience is a foundation stone on which all life is built, and it is laid in the home in obeying parents. True obedience is not bondage, but noble liberty. The steel track does not infringe upon the liberty of the locomotive, but gives it all the liberty it has. Right commandments are the steel track along which we can drive ourselves at utmost speed with perfect safety, and thus enjoy our fullest liberty. Subjection to wise parents trains children into wisdom and self-control and strong character, and these are safety and liberty and life. But children that leave home self-willed and disobedient will be driven about by the winds of impulse and passion and caught in the currents of sin and go to pieces on the rocks. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

## VI

### THE CARPENTER

Is not this the carpenter?—*Mark 6:3.*

YES, that is just who it was. The question was asked by his townsmen in derision and scorn as though it would place a stigma upon Jesus that would forever discredit him as a prophet, but the designation has ever since been worn by him as a mark of honor. Unconsciously they placed on his brow one of his brightest crowns. It is a startling fact, which even after eighteen hundred years has not lost its wonder, that the Saviour of the world was a carpenter. This is not what the Jews expected, and it is not what we would expect. They looked and longed for a Messiah who would come as a royal conqueror, wearing purple robes and marshalling great armies to break the iron rule of Rome and raise them to political power and splendor. We would look for a great scholar and statesman with wisdom and eloquence to move the world. But God's ways are not as our ways and his Son came neither as the one nor as the other, but as a carpenter. This question is the only gleam of light we have from the life of Jesus from the twelfth to the thirtieth year of his age. Of this long period comprising more than half of his life not a word is recorded to tell us what he was doing except this word carpenter. But as an artist with a single sweep of his pencil or brush will sometimes draw the outline of his picture, so this word paints in outline the life of Jesus during this period. It sketches the life of one who did

not separate himself from his fellow-men, but knit himself into the humblest human relations. It shows us a common toiler, working at a humble trade and living contentedly in honest poverty. There is color enough in this word to paint a complete picture of Christ's outer life. It is worth more than all the apocryphal gospels that are full of absurd stories of his youth. "We may, indeed, be thankful that the word remains, for it is full of meaning and has exercised a noble and blessed influence over the fortunes of mankind." What are some of the lessons from this pregnant word?

1. First, we see that Jesus engaged in useful work. He was a producer, as the word translated carpenter literally means. There were more and better houses in Nazareth, or more ploughs and ox-yokes on the surrounding farms, because he lived, than there otherwise would have been. We are sure that his trade was well learned and that everything that left his shop displayed the most thorough and finished workmanship. He who could build a star and sweep the orbit of a planet, whose hand had left its finishing touch on every grass-blade and dew-drop, could also lay off his angles and strike his circles true, and he would mortise timbers or shape ox-yokes so that they would render the best service and would last. His work never needed to be done over after him, he left no loose joints to be tightened up, or rough places to be smoothed down. He put in full time and did as good work when alone as when in the presence of his employer. Every one knew that he could be trusted, and his work bore an unsurpassed reputation and commanded the highest prices. All this was a true part of his ministry by which he helped to save the world from cold and hunger; and it was a fitting preparation for that spiritual carpentry by which he was to join humanity together and build a kingdom that would stand forever. We need

more of this spirit of faithful service in useful lines in these days when there is so much slovenly work done in every trade and profession, and so many are contributing nothing to the wealth and welfare of the world. There are men and women that are non-producers and mere consumers. They are not doing anything that is useful to others, but are simply living in idleness and pleasure. They consume food and clothing and luxuries, they require many others to serve them, but they never serve others. The world is never the richer for their having lived in it by a grain of wheat or a nobler thought. No man or woman has a right to live such a life, whether a tramp or a millionaire. There are others that are worse than non-producers, that are destroyers or robbers of wealth. The whole business of distilling, brewing and selling intoxicating drink is so much waste and ruin, turning God's golden grain into the devil's fire-water, destroying immense quantities of wealth that would feed and clothe hungry, ragged children, and tumbling the rotten bodies of men into dishonored graves. Gambling and much that goes under the name of speculation produce nothing, but only deprive others of what they have produced. A lottery, whether run in a gambling den, or in a church, is practically an arrangement by which a number of people combine to see who can steal from the others: they are all thieves in principle. Every one ought to test his life by the standard of productiveness for human welfare. "Sure good," says Ruskin, "is first in feeding people, then in dressing people, and lastly rightly pleasing people with arts, or sciences, or any other subject of thought." "The thistle that grows in thy path," says Carlyle, "dig it out, that a blade of grass, or a drop of nourishing milk, may grow there instead. The waste cotton-shrub, gather its waste white down, spin it, weave it: that in place of idle litter

there may be folded webs, and the naked skin of man be covered."

2. Second, we see that Jesus was content to stay in the ranks of common toilers. His reputed father was a carpenter, and he continued in the same trade. He did not strive to enter the law, which was the most influential profession among the Jews. He did not hunt around for some more rapid way of making money, but contentedly toiled on. There is a great deal said in these days about "getting on in the world," by which it is meant that young men should get off the farms and out of the trades into the professions and offices, and that everybody should get rich. The feeling is created and sown in the very air that a boy is worth nothing unless he means to be, and gives promise of becoming, a great capitalist or lawyer or professional man. Success is an emphatic word in our vocabulary. Now it is undoubtedly true that every one should endeavor to develop his powers to the fullest measure in useful service, and this noble ambition should especially inspire the young. But this cry of "getting on in the world" generally sets up false ideals and hopes, and works great harm. It is physically impossible that all of us should get on in the sense intended. There can be only one President of the United States, while there are seventy millions of us that must remain in humbler stations. Not all young men can become professional men, for the great mass of them must work on farms and in trades. We cannot all get rich, for there is not enough wealth to go around. So the gospel of success begets false hopes which in many cases must be disappointed. But, worse still, it sets up a false standard of manhood. It measures worth by wealth, and attainment by conspicuousness of position. But the truth is that men in getting up in this sense often get down. The true standard of manhood is something immeasurably

better than wealth and something that every one can attain. "I believe," says Charles Kingsley, "that a man might be, as a tailor or as a carpenter, every inch of him a saint, a scholar, and a gentleman." A saint, a scholar, and a gentleman: these are the qualities that constitute a true man, and every man, whatever his station in life, can have them. Jesus was as truly a saint, a scholar, and a gentleman while making ploughs and ox-yokes as while preaching the sermon on the mount. Instead of keeping up this everlasting cry of getting on in the world and teaching it to our children, let us know that most of us must stay where we are, and that in the humblest station we can develop the highest manhood and may every one of us be a saint, a scholar, and a gentleman.

3. What, now, is the relation of the church of to-day to Jesus the carpenter? Or, what is the relation of the church to workingmen, of whom Jesus was one? The painful fact must be admitted that there is a chasm which appears to be growing between the church and the working classes, especially in the cities. The causes for this separation are complex and lie partly on both sides. But we ought to be most concerned with the causes that lie, not on the side of workingmen, but on the side of the church. The main cause on our side is the caste spirit of wealth and pride that is creeping into the church. Costly churches are built in which only well-to-do and rich people are expected or even permitted to worship. It is a literal and would be a ludicrous, were it not such a shocking, fact that if Jesus were to appear unknown in his carpenter's clothes in some churches bearing his name to-day, he would be given the cold shoulder and might even be shown the way out. The church that was founded by a Carpenter whom the common people heard gladly and whose gospel was first preached by fishermen, that began by levelling all human

distinctions and gathering in the poor, has begun the process of sifting out the better classes and is in danger of becoming the exclusive possession and privilege of the rich. Workingmen instinctively feel this and are publicly saying it. In a great meeting of workingmen in London the name of Jesus was cheered, but the name of the church was hissed. And so, while the churches are running after and welcoming people of means and social standing who come with gloved hands and spotless linen, the workingmen are passing them by in crowds. This charge does not lie equally against all churches, nor only against very rich churches. The same spirit may be in your church and mine. If we by any means, or air of treatment, make any distinctions among people and make it more easy and agreeable for some to worship in our church than for others, if we begin any process of sifting out what we are pleased to consider the better class of people, we are guilty of deadly sin against the very cross of Christ. And if we make a church in which Jesus the carpenter would not be just as welcome as Christ the glorified, he will repudiate us with wrathful indignation, as he did the church of the Pharisees, and publicans and harlots shall go into the kingdom of God before us. The church must strive to bring itself into wider and more vital touch with all classes and conditions of men. It must intensify its social consciousness and minister to all human needs. Christ not only preached theology, as the church ever must, but he also fed the hungry and healed the sick and touched life with helpful hands at many points. The institutional church is a bud in this direction that promises to flower out into all the life of the people. The church of the future is likely to be a more complex and many-sided institution than is the church of to-day. It will not be less divine, but it will be more human. It will not have less to do with the next world, but it will

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have more to do with this world. It will not do less for the spiritual life, but it will do more for the physical and social life. It will not do less for those inside its walls, but it will do more for those outside. It will not have less room for the rich, but it will have more room and an equal welcome for the poor. It will not preach less faithfully the fatherhood of God, but it will practice more faithfully the brotherhood of men. It will not have less trust in and worship for Jesus the King, but it will have more respect for and fellowship with Jesus the carpenter. And it will more perfectly please him both as king and as carpenter, and more truly glorify his name.

## VII

### A GREAT REVIVAL MEETING

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituræa and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, in the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the region round about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins; as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

The voice of one crying in the wilderness,  
Make ye ready the way of the Lord,  
Make his paths straight.  
Every valley shall be filled,  
And every mountain and hill shall be brought low;  
And the crooked shall become straight,  
And the rough ways smooth;  
And all the flesh shall see the salvation of God.

He said therefore to the multitudes that went out to be baptized of him, Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And even now is the axe also laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. And the multitudes asked him, saying, What then must we do? And he answered and said unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath food, let him do likewise. And there came also publicans to be baptized, and they said unto him, Master, what must we do? And he said unto them, Extort no more than that which is appointed you. And soldiers also asked him, saying, And we, what must we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither exact *anything* wrongfully; and be content with your wages. And as the people were in expectation, and all men reasoned in their

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hearts concerning John, whether haply he were the Christ; John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but there cometh he that is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and *with* fire: whose fan is in his hand, throughly to cleanse his threshing-floor, and to gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire.—*Luke 3: 1-17.*

**A** GREAT revival meeting was going on down in the Jordan valley. The preacher was John the Baptist. Nothing had been heard of him for thirty years during which he was growing up in the hill country of Judea in that seclusion and silence in which all great things must grow. He was a Nazarite, we might call him a monk, a man who had withdrawn himself from human society and for years had lived a solitary life in the rocky regions around the Dead Sea. His clothing consisted of a loose mantle or sack of coarse haircloth bound around his loins with a leather strap; and he lived on locusts and wild honey. His life was close to the earth on its material side, but on its spiritual side it was close to the sky: for he lived in meditation and prayer. What was the meaning of this strange life? It was a reaction and protest against the formal hypocritical religion of his time. Religion among the Jews had gone to seed. There was no sap in it, there were no green leaves and growing fruit on it, but only dry pods and husks. The ceremonial system of Moses, good and necessary in its time, had grown into a hard formality and hollow hypocrisy from which humble, honest souls turned away in loathing. Jewish orthodoxy had thus become a huge heap of dry wood and straw: John the Baptist was the match that set this tinder on fire; he was the Martin Luther of this reformation. Disgusted with Pharisaic hypocrisy he turned from the Jewish church into the wilderness: not that he might have less religion, but

more religion; that out there in the solitude he might get close to God, as Moses did in the mount.

1. At length, being filled with the Spirit, John suddenly emerged from obscurity and appeared down on the banks of the Jordan where he began to preach. His striking personality, rough haircloth garment with its leather strap, his uncut hair, flowing beard, and deep-set, burning eye suggested a prophet. The news reached Jerusalem that there was a prophet at the Jordan, and the crowds went pouring down the steep, rocky roads to hear him. The excitement spread through the land, and the people came from every quarter. What was the secret of the preacher's power? Not his manner of dress and appearance. Eccentricities never made a Martin Luther or a John Knox. Long hair does not make a long head. John the Baptist was a sincere soul touched with the fire of God. He had got rid of empty forms and conventional cant and was speaking out his genuine beliefs and deep fiery emotions. Instead of mumbling traditional dogmas, John spoke living truth from the heart to the heart. He was a man with a message who brought religion back to reality and made it a living, burning power. Such preaching created a tremendous sensation and drew the people in great crowds. They had been fed on dry husks long enough and wanted bread. The desiccation of our creed is one of the greatest dangers of religion. When the spirit evaporates out of it and leaves it dry and dead, it becomes so much husk and chaff that it is fit only to be burned up or blown away. We need to keep the sap of life flowing through our creed and ever breathe the holy breath of God that our faith may keep full of fresh vitality and fruitfulness.

2. The burning message of John was repentance as a preparation for the Messiah, who was about to appear. All this false religion had to be got rid of to make room

for the true religion. The ground must be cleared of thorn roots that the good seed may be planted. Repentance prepares the way for Christ in our hearts and lives. Sinful moods and motives, passions and pursuits, are obstructive and antagonistic to the presence of Christ in our souls, and must be uprooted and cast out before his Spirit can come in. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Repentance is the reaction of the soul against sin. The Greek word means "a change of mind," a mental act that reverses the mind and will. It is thus in its root not an emotion, but a volition, which we can exercise and for which we are responsible. It is a perception that grows into a pain and overpowers our love for sin. As an outer sign of such inner repentance, John instituted and administered the rite of baptism. Sprinkling and washing with water were familiar religious ceremonies among the Jews (Lev. 14:7; Ezek. 36:25), so that the rite would be readily understood by them. The outer sign confirms the inner act and roots it deeper in the soul, and we should receive this seal of our faith. John also quoted the prophet Isaiah to prove that his message had ancient authority and divine sanction. The truth he was preaching was not revolutionary but evolutionary; the new grew out of the old and was its blossoming and fruitage. Isaiah was the original voice: John was the echo; Isaiah declared the message of repentance: John interpreted and applied it. The Bible is one book through which one increasing purpose runs, and throughout all its pages repentance prepares the way for the salvation of God. Every sin of ours puts an obstruction before the wheels of Christ's chariot, and we should clear it away that his path may be straight and smooth.

3. This preacher was not afraid of his congregation. A great multitude was massed before John, but he faced

them without fear and struck straight and hard at their sins. Among the multitudes, whom did John espy but Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt. 3: 7) from Jerusalem? It must have surprised the fervent preacher to see these hypocritical prelates and cold sceptics coming to hear his fiery denunciations. Will not the preacher, who has been so hotly denouncing sin, now smooth his words and grow polite and cool and colorless in his preaching before these powerful dignitaries of the church and the world? No, John only made his arrows sharper and shot them straight at these doctors of divinity. "Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance." That showed the magnificent courage of the preacher. John was brave as a lion, and the presence of these big sinners from Jerusalem only roused his might and fire. He called them by a name that scorched and branded their guilt, and he gave them the same message of repentance that he did to the rabble and scum of the city. As Carlyle thought that the worst man in England would probably be found in the House of Lords, so John thought the worst sinners in Judea were these Pharisees and Sadducees. Official position in the church is no assurance of holiness and protection against fiery condemnation. One may wear its sacred robes and stand in its pulpit, or at its communion table, and yet conceal vipers in his heart. John read the replies that the Pharisees were inwardly making to his preaching. "And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father": that is just what they were saying. They prided themselves on their birth and ancestry and thought they were made of finer clay and richer blood than others, and were therefore safe. But John dealt this pride a crushing blow: "for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." He told them that

their proud birth and blood counted for nothing and that God could make better people out of the common rocks and dirt of the earth. Good birth is something to appreciate and guard, but when it is turned into selfish exclusiveness and trusted as a substitute for personal worth, it becomes foolish and wicked pride that shall be cast down into the dust. John further told his hearers that it was of no use to trust in such things, for the axe was now laid at the root of life, and every false faith should be cast into the fire.

4. This searching message brought conviction and alarm to many of the hearers and drew from them the exclamation, What then must we do? They were right in thinking that they must do something to find and walk in the way of life, and John with great skill adapted the message to each class of inquirers. To the people he said, "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath food let him do likewise." In the hard, selfish strife of their day they were to bless other lives and beautify their own lives with the spirit of charity. Publicans were told to practice no extortion, and soldiers to do no violence. Each one was bidden to repent of and renounce the sin that specially beset him. The gospel does not simply deal in glittering generalities, but it fits itself closely down into each one's life and heart, pierces every soul at the point of its own guilt, and bids us repent and cease to do evil.

5. So great were the popularity and prestige of John that the people were wondering whether he were not the Christ. It was a splendid opportunity and critical hour for this preacher. A wave of popularity was swiftly bearing him on its topmost crest towards power. The people were ready to believe anything about him and to do anything for him. All he needed to do was to announce himself as the Messiah, and the nation would accept him

with burning zeal, and there was no telling what grand results might be achieved. A glittering crown seemed to be just within his grasp. Why not take it? Very plausible arguments would play around his mind to persuade him that this was the right thing to do. Would he not use such power for the good of men and the glory of God? And who knew but that he was indeed come to the kingdom for such a time as this? The temptation to seize offered opportunities of power and turn them to selfish ends is one of the strongest that can strike the human mind. This was the master stroke with which the devil assailed Christ. When we look into our own hearts and lives and see how quick we are to push ourselves into the first place and seize everything that comes our way, we may know something of the strength and greed of this temptation. To let pass an opportunity for enriching ourselves at another's expense, to stand out of another's way, to efface self and become lost in the popularity of a rival—who of us is sufficient for this? This was the temptation that beat against John as he grew in prestige and the people reasoned in their hearts whether he were the Christ. But he gave no sign of the struggle as he told the truth about himself, confessing, "I am not the Christ," and declaring, "there cometh he that is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose." Out of this marvellous self-effacement of John shines the unmatched splendor of his humility and supreme devotion to Christ. Yet this man that assigned himself so lowly a place, Jesus exalted to the highest rank and declared that among them that were born of women there was none greater than he. The last shall be first, and he that would be great amongst us must be servant of all.

## VIII

### THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John would have hindered him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? But Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffereth him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway from the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him; and lo, a voice out of the heavens, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.—*Matthew 3: 13-17.*

**T**HIS is the first mention of Jesus since he was twelve years of age and he is now thirty: eighteen years of unbroken silence. But he was growing back there in seclusion, and the unwritten years of his life are as truly a part of his mission as the written gospels. He was now ready for his work. Then Jesus came to the Jordan, and, after hearing John, offered himself for baptism. John hesitated to administer the rite, saying, “I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?” But Jesus persisted and John yielded.  
Why did Jesus receive baptism?

1. There was some real reason for this act. He needed this ordinance and would not have been perfect without it. It was not a fictitious performance done for mere show, but a genuine baptism. We must take this view of the whole life of Jesus. There was no acting or theatrical display in it, but everything in it was real, just what it purported to be. His growth in wisdom was a true process of education. His temptation was not a sham battle, but a real fight. When he wept at Lazarus'

grave, his tears came from the heart. When he prayed in Gethsemane that the cup might pass from him, for a moment he meant it. The life of Jesus was genuine in every act and utterance, and there was not a word in it said for effect.

2. Jesus received baptism in obedience to an appointed ordinance. "Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness," or divine appointments. The baptism of John was appointed of God, for John was his prophet. It was therefore binding upon all those that acknowledged God and meant to keep his commandments. Jesus was made under the law, and therefore under obedience to the ordinances of religion. These ordinances he kept from his circumcision in infancy down to the Passover under the shadow of the cross. He was circumcised, he was baptized, he kept the feasts, he read the Scriptures, he prayed, he worshipped in the synagogue. Not one of these means of grace did he refuse or neglect to receive. He did not treat them as being subject to human judgment and taste, but as being of divine appointment and obligation. He did not maintain that because he was holy he did not need these ordinances, but because he was holy he kept them perfectly. This example of our Lord shows us the necessity of religious ordinances and the duty of observing them. Objections are made to ordinances as being unnecessary and lifeless forms: the spirit is the life. Undoubtedly the inner spirit is the life of religion, but can we have the inner life without having the external form? Can we drink water without using the cup that holds the water? Can we have fruit without having fruit trees? We may have trees without fruit, but not fruit without trees. So we may have ordinances without religion, but not religion without ordinances. Dangerous as ordinances are, we must have them. Jesus always put vital emphasis on the inner life of religion, but he never did

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away with ordinances; on the contrary, he obeyed them himself and enjoined them upon us.

3. The exact meaning of baptism in the case of Jesus must be discriminated carefully. The first significance of John's baptism was repentance for sin; and in this sense Jesus could not personally have received it. His soul was white and there was no stain upon him for water to wash away. Yet, while he had no sins of his own, he was so identified with the sinful world as its Saviour that he bore its sins representatively, and the washing away of these sins was symbolized in his baptism. John's baptism had a second significance which did personally apply to Jesus. It meant, not only leaving the old life of sin, but also entering the new life of obedience. It was the sign of God's kingdom, a mark of consecration to his service. In this sense Jesus could personally accept it. As the Founder of the kingdom, it was necessary that he should visibly enter it first himself. He did not come to stand outside the door and point men in; simply to tell men how to be holy, but to be holy himself and at every step to lead the way. Jesus, then, in being baptized, showed that he was in the kingdom by accepting its appointed sign, by wearing its badge, by marching under its flag. Baptism applies to us in both branches of its meaning. We have an old sinful life to put off and a new obedient life to put on. Baptism is the sign of this change. It is not the cause of it, for forty baptisms would not wash away one sin. The inward change of heart is the cause of the baptism, and the baptism is the sign of the change. By this act we enroll ourselves among the soldiers of Christ and take our place in his ranks under his flag. We give proof that we are willing to do the will of Christ, and thus to fulfill all righteousness.

4. Jesus came up out of that baptismal water a new man into a new world. The heavens opened and the

Holy Spirit streamed down upon him and filled him with the fullness of God. That Spirit that Moses and Isaiah had received in limited measure and fragmentary gifts, he now received without measure and the Godhead dwelt in him bodily. Then came a voice from heaven, saying, "This in my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This probably marked the moment when Jesus became fully conscious of his divinity and Messiahship. Into the mystery of this moment we cannot enter. What glad recognition of his Father, what trembling sense of responsibility, what mighty throb of joy, he experienced we cannot know. But through all his hours of ministry and trial and darkness, he must have been made strong and glad with this assurance. This great blessing came out of his obedience in receiving baptism. Jesus probably had no expectation of this gift when he offered himself for this ordinance. He was then simply doing his duty in fulfilling all righteousness. But he faithfully obeyed it, and, lo, this humble duty blossomed and bore these wondrous heavenly fruits. Had Jesus never gone down into that baptismal water, he never would have come up under an opened sky with the Holy Spirit streaming upon him, and God would never have pronounced him his Son. We never can tell how near we are to an unexpected blessing when we are about to perform a duty. The humblest act faithfully done may be the doorway into the greatest gift of God. Let us not hesitate at any of God's ordinances, or commandments, or opportunities, but, however unnecessary or humble or hard they may seem, fulfill all righteousness, and then, as we come up from the service, we also in some degree shall see heaven opened and the Spirit of God descending upon us, and shall know that we are God's beloved sons in whom he is well pleased.

## IX

### THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he afterward hungered. And the tempter came and said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him into the holy city; and he set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written,

He shall give his angels charge concerning thee :  
And on their hands they shall bear thee up,  
Lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Jesus said unto him, Again it is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him unto an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and he said unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him; and behold, angels came and ministered unto him.—*Matthew 4: 1-II.*

“ Why comes temptation but for man to meet  
And master and make crouch beneath his foot,  
And so be pedestaled in triumph ? ”—*Browning.*

“ **T**HEN,” immediately after his baptism, was Jesus led up into the wilderness to be tempted. Baptism and temptation are here crowded close together. Scarcely had the voice from heaven died away when a whisper was heard from hell. Out of the baptismal benediction of the Father, Jesus stepped into a desperate struggle with the devil. There are sudden and

violent changes of weather in the spiritual world. It was while coming down from the Mount where for forty days he had held communion with God that Moses lost his temper and smashed the tables of the law to pieces. It was just after leaving the communion table that Peter denied his Lord and swore that he did not know him. The purest deed is bordered with temptation; our finest moods may be marred by an evil suggestion. When God is especially blessing us, Satan is near by waiting for his chance.

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit" to be tempted. His temptation was not an accident or evil fate, but a divine appointment. Temptation has its place and use in the world. Had we been building a world we would have shut temptation out, but God let it in. A world of moral development would not be possible without temptation. There is nothing wrong, then, in being tempted; the wrong begins only when we begin to consent to it. Yet we are not to run into temptation of our own accord. Jesus did not go of himself but was led of the Spirit. We may not hunt the devil, or put ourselves in the way of evil. The path of duty as we are led of the Spirit will take us into temptation enough.

"And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he afterwards hungered." Jesus was reduced to the lowest point of physical strength when the temptation struck him. Satan did not assault him at his strongest moment when the Spirit was descending upon him, but at his frailest hour when his vitality was at its lowest ebb. Satan knows a man's weakest time and he waits for it. The ability of the soul to resist sin is not an unvarying power, but it rises and falls with the spiritual pulse. There are weak moments in the strongest life. The best man has his hours when he would not dare to meet the devil. These irresolute moments are often connected with

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bodily exhaustion and nervous depression. We need to keep a constant grip on the strength of God that when we are weak we may be strong.

1. Before the battle begins let us take a general view of the field and consider the meaning of the conflict. What was the present situation and state of mind with Jesus? He had just come up from his baptism which, as we have seen, probably marked the moment when he became fully conscious of his divinity and supernatural power and Messiahship. He now knew that he was the Son of God at whose bidding stones would turn into bread and water into wine. Seized and overwhelmed with this mighty consciousness, Jesus went into the wilderness to meditate upon and determine how he was to handle this tremendous power. What would be the first, most natural, strongest and most deadly temptation in the possession of such power? To use it selfishly for personal ends. This is the temptation that always arises in connection with the sudden acquisition of power, as when a man gains great wealth or a high office. Sudden power of any kind puts a strain on character and is a dangerous possession. The great question was, How would Jesus use his divine power? For selfish ends, personal comfort and aggrandizement? or only in the service of God for the salvation of the world? It was a critical moment with Christ. If he were to use his power one way, he would be lost; if he were to use it the other way, the world would be saved. Satan saw this psychologic moment, and he was there to try to push Christ off the edge of the right use of his power into the bottomless abyss. This selfish use of power was the poisoned point of each of the three arrows that Satan shot at Christ.

2. "If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." The very tip of this temptation

is a doubt. This was the tip of the first temptation Satan shot into the world. "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Doubt is the mother of disobedience. Get us to doubt truth and duty and God, and it is an easy step into sin. This temptation is the same appeal to appetite that Satan made to Eve. Jesus, having fasted forty days, craved food in every fibre of his body, and Satan kindled his appetite with thoughts of fresh, fragrant bread. The proposal was that Jesus should get bread, not by taking it away from others, but by creating it himself. How innocent and reasonable and necessary and right this seemed! But Jesus saw through its false innocence into its black heart. For this was a temptation to use his power for his own gratification, and if he did this once he would do it again, and in thus seeking his life he would lose it. Deeper still, this was practical distrust of God. Would not the Father provide, and in his very first extremity shall he cut loose from God and take care of himself? So this seemingly innocent act would have been the first step away from God. Therefore, Jesus smote the evil thought with the trustful declaration, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God;" and that temptation lay dead. But it is not dead for us. Appetite is still for Satan our most vulnerable point of attack. He not only plays upon natural and rightful appetites, but he has created new and false ones with which to destroy men. And how artfully is the plea of necessity made? "I must make a living and therefore must continue in this evil business. I must compete with rivals and therefore cannot be too scrupulous about methods." The necessity for bread is supposed to make any wrong right and to wipe out the whole decalogue. Anything to get a living and make money is the devil's creed. But it is not necessary that we should live at all. There

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is only one moral necessity upon us: to do right; to trust God, and keep his commandments.

3. Foiled with one weapon Satan quickly drops it and tries another. Taking Jesus in imagination or in a vision to a pinnacle of the Temple, he said, "If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and on their hands they shall bear thee up, lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone." This temptation is just the opposite of the first one. Defeated on one side of Christ, the devil slips around and attacks him on the other. The first temptation was that Jesus should trust God too little: this one is that he should trust him too much; that he should be presumptuous in his trust. It was a suggestion that he could fly from the appointed path of obedience off at any angle of caprice, that he could do just as he pleased, and God would keep him. Even faith may become presumptuous and disobedient. We want God to keep us, not in all his ways, but in all our ways. The faith cure is virtually a proposal to jump from the pinnacle of the Temple without getting hurt, to set natural laws at defiance and expect God to work a miraculous deliverance. This temptation also involved the use of Christ's power for a personal end. For the object seems to have been that he should thus gain the applause of the multitude and get himself accepted as the Messiah. The Jews wanted a Messiah that would come with observation in power and pomp; and this advent from the Temple would be received with popular enthusiasm. But Jesus saw through this proposal also, and smote it with the declaration, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God"; and another temptation lay dead at his feet.

4. Defeated again, the Angel of Darkness makes another desperate assault on the Prince of Light. It is his

last chance, and he stakes all on one daring venture. From a mountain-top he spreads out before Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and says to him, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." This was an appeal to Christ's human ambition, holding up before him a glittering, dazzling prize. It was also offering him in promise a short cut to that universal kingdom which he had come to gain through the long and painful pathway of the cross. Why not win the kingdom in a moment by one little act? Perhaps the real meaning of this temptation was that he should adopt worldly methods to gain the world, which would make him a subject of the prince of this world. How frequent and strong is this temptation with us? Satan spreads out before us, not all the kingdoms of this world, but only some little portion of it: as much as we can see from our door-step, or over our counter or office desk; we want it, and many are willing to bend the knee to the devil to get it. And how strong is the temptation to take the short cut to our ambition? The way of righteous getting, of slow growth, of patient toil and sacrifice, the way of the cross, is not to our liking. We want the kingdom at a stroke and are in danger of selling our souls to get it. Jesus felt the full force of this temptation. He gazed upon the splendid picture and fascinating scene of that outspread world. He saw how short was the step that promised him its throne. Then turning in resistless might, he tore the mask from his tempter, revealed him in all his hideous nakedness as Satan, bade him from his presence and declared his eternal allegiance to the Lord his God. The tempter had shot his last arrow and had no other weapon to bring forth. The Son of God was still untouched; not one fleck had spotted the immaculate whiteness of his soul. And the devil, foiled, defeated and crushed,

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fled and vanished into the infinite darkness whence he came.

5. Mark the means by which Jesus resisted these temptations. "It is written." "It is written." "It is written." The Word of God was his shield and every fiery dart fell harmless at his feet. Yet it was not by the mere quoting of Scripture that he defended himself, for the devil could quote Scripture too. It was by his grip on the realities back of the words that he conquered. The sense of God's Fatherhood, trust in him, steady sober obedience to him, unswerving loyalty to him, were his support. He conquered by the ordinary means of grace. He did not call into action his divinity, but bore this temptation in his humanity. He was tempted like as we are and conquered as we may. We need no new weapons to resist Satan: for it is still written. The Old Bible furnishes shields and swords to match all the temptations of our modern life. What we need in our temptations is a stronger grasp on these eternal verities of God's Word. In proportion as we believe and feel these truths shall we have power to resist evil; and when our whole consciousness is filled with them, Satan can find nothing in us and cannot touch us. Resist the devil and he will flee from you; and when he is gone, the angels of God will come.

## X

## HOW THE KINGDOM STARTED TO GROW

Again on the morrow John was standing, and two of his disciples ; and he looked upon Jesus as he walked, and saith, Behold, the Lamb of God ! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. And Jesus turned, and beheld them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye ? And they said unto him, Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Master), where abidest thou ? He saith unto them, Come, and ye shall see. They came therefore and saw where he abode ; and they abode with him that day : it was about the tenth hour. One of the two that heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He findeth first his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, Christ). He brought him unto Jesus. Jesus looked upon him, and said, Thou art Simon the son of John : thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation, Peter). On the morrow he was minded to go forth into Galilee, and he findeth Philip : and Jesus saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth ? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile ! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me ? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God ; thou art King of Israel.—*John 1:35-49.*

**W**HILE Jesus was up in the wilderness being tempted John continued his work down in the Jordan valley, and the multitudes continued to throng his preaching. At length the ecclesiastical authorities up in Jerusalem thought it was time to look into the affair, and they sent a committee down to investi-

gate. The committee questioned John closely as to who he was, but with beautiful honesty and humility he "confessed, and denied not; and he confessed, I am not the Christ," and declared, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as said Isaiah the prophet." At this juncture Jesus returned from the wilderness to the Jordan valley and again came into the presence of John.

1. As the Baptist stood with two of his disciples, one of whom was Andrew and the other was doubtless John the author of this gospel, he pointed them to Jesus and exclaimed, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" Jesus as yet had wrought no miracle and had delivered no discourses, he had given no sign of his divinity and had not unsealed his lips as to his mission, but he was stamped with such lofty spirituality and heavenly grace that John discerned in him the Son of God. Here is a prophet in the flood-tide of his popularity and success pointing his disciples away from himself to another. He could see the coming man and knew how to retire before him gracefully. John was now the central figure in Judea, and all eyes were turned to him in expectation. It seemed that a splendid crown was within his grasp. Yet he deliberately rejected it and placed it upon the brow of another. He appreciated the solitary and supreme greatness of Jesus and cast his own crown at his feet. "He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all." In pronouncing him the Lamb of God John revealed Jesus as the final fulfillment of the old dispensation. The paschal lamb, that had so long stained the altar with its blood but could not wash away sin, had accomplished its purpose in preparing the way for the true Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. The ideas shadowed forth in type and symbol, psalm and prophecy, were now realized. The century plant at last

had bloomed. And John, great as he was, blotted himself out, gave his place to Jesus, and sent his own disciples to him.

2. The two disciples turned from John and followed Jesus. They were not so attached to their master that they could not yield to the power of a superior attraction. "The Lamb of God" would be the fulfillment of their highest hopes, and they resolved to become acquainted with him. Jesus turned around and asked them, "What seek ye?" This question is a test of conduct and character, and its answer is a self-revelation. What a man seeks shows what he is. The savage seeks plunder, the dissolute man seeks intoxication, the scholar seeks truth, and the saint seeks worship. When one seeks Jesus he reveals an inner impulse after the highest goodness. The two disciples answered, "Master, where abidest thou?" Jesus answered, "Come, and ye shall see." This conversation was all natural, easy and courteous. There were no pompous formalities to be observed, but these men met on the simplest terms of friendship. Jesus would have us come to him in the same confidence, and he has given us free access to God himself. The two disciples accepted the hearty invitation of Jesus and abode with him that day. From ten o'clock in the morning until the evening shadows fell, Jesus and Andrew and John engaged in earnest conversation concerning the Messiah and his kingdom; and when they separated Jesus had bound two disciples to himself with cords of faith and fellowship that never broke. There was no revival meeting, or religious excitement, in connection with these conversions, but in the privacy and quietness of a personal interview these men gave their hearts to Christ. It is not necessary to engage in public preaching and sway great audiences in order to save men: a private word may be equally effective in drawing a soul into the kingdom.

"Come, and ye shall see," is the invitation and the promise of Jesus. He does not ask us to accept him blindly on mere authority, but on the ground of personal investigation and experience. He would have us try his gospel and judge it by the results. Christ is not afraid of being known. He will bear acquaintance. If any one is willing to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine that it is of God.

3. Jesus gained the first two disciples himself; and now these disciples started out to gain others. Andrew found Simon, his brother, and brought him to Jesus. If John found his brother James at the same time, the number of disciples was doubled the first day. Andrew, full of the joy of his own discovery, hastened to his brother with the announcement, "We have found the Messiah!" That was glad news to a Jew, and Andrew could not keep it to himself, but immediately imparted it to his brother; and "he brought him unto Jesus." Jesus found Andrew, and Andrew found Simon: this is the way the kingdom grows; each converted man finding the next man. Jesus began the process, and his own converts carried it on. As the Father sent him into the world, so he sent his disciples into the world, and thus Christians are Christ multiplied and continued. Andrew found his brother, and kinship and friendship are natural lines of connection along which the gospel still works. Ties of blood are powerful cords for drawing others into the kingdom. God does not mean that these ties, which are so sweet and strong in this world, should be sundered in the next world. But kinship and friendship are not immortal until they are bound up into the same bundle of life with Christ. Jesus looked upon Simon with searching insight and said, "Thou art Simon, the son of John: thou shalt be called Cephas" (which is by interpretation, Peter). Peter means rock, and the new name described

the new nature that he was to receive through his fellowship with Jesus. Unstable and impulsive on the surface, there was yet lying deep in Peter a bed of rock that became a foundation of solid steadfastness in the kingdom of Christ. There are too many Christians of clay: Christ wants disciples of rock. Andrew remained an obscure disciple, while Peter began to shine with brilliance and became conspicuous and forever famous, the one disciple revolving around the other as a mere satellite and known as "Simon Peter's brother." Yet it was the obscure brother that drew the brilliant brother within the attraction of the Sun of Righteousness and thus made him luminous. We may not be flaming apostles and shining lights ourselves, but we may draw others to Christ that may become conspicuous in his service. All that we bring to him shall shine by his light and shall thus help to light up the world.

4. On the next day Jesus started for Galilee, for he was not a recluse, hiding himself in the wilderness, like John, but he carried on his ministry in the busy haunts of men. Presently he fell in with Philip, who may also have been returning from the preaching of John the Baptist and was in the right mood to receive the Messiah. Jesus said to him, "Follow me." Philip joined the little company of disciples, and thus it grew, even as it passed along the public road. Andrew and John sought Jesus, but Jesus sought Philip. All are not brought into the kingdom in the same way, by the same means and with the same experiences, but there are differing means and methods, and every conversion is stamped with some mark of individuality. "Follow me," is the invitation that Christ gives to every one and is the tie by which he would bind every disciple to himself. These first disciples followed Jesus outwardly by living with him under his teaching and influence. They thus were molded into his likeness and

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filled with his Spirit and prepared for their great work of preaching the gospel. We cannot now follow Jesus after this manner, but we can none the less really and vitally follow him in faith and fellowship so as to grow into his image and be fitted for his service. We must all follow some one as our leader and master, and we find the right path and the highest leadership when we follow Jesus as our Master and Lord.

5. Again the process of one convert finding another started. "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." This speech shows that Philip was a student of the Scriptures and knew what to look for in the Messiah, and that he found these marks fulfilled in Jesus. But this announcement that sprang from a heart of joy and was so full of good intention instantly struck a snag and stirred up prejudice in Nathanael's mind. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" he incredulously inquired. He was from Cana (John 21: 2), a neighboring village, and doubtless shared the prejudice that one town often entertains against another. So he met the gladdest announcement that could come to a Jew with the rebuff, "You do not mean to say that the Messiah could have come out of that disreputable town of Nazareth, do you?" Prejudice in its myriad forms is still one of the greatest obstructions in the way of the gospel. Prejudice against the Christian faith on account of its mysteries and difficulties, prejudice against the Church on account of its inconsistencies, many are the objections that a prejudiced mind can interpose against the call of Christ. Had Philip undertaken to argue this point with Nathanael he might have been beaten in the argument; at least he would probably only have confirmed Nathanael in his prejudice. But his simple answer was, Come and

see, try this Messiah for yourself. Nathanael acted upon this reasonable proposal, and, after a brief interview with him and a personal experience of his fellowship, he exclaimed, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the king of Israel." What no amount of controversy could have done, seeing for himself did do. This is still Christ's own proposal for the solution of all our doubts and difficulties and prejudices. Let us honestly go to him and try his doctrine, and we shall know it is of God and that he is our Messiah.

6. This is the way in which the kingdom started to grow: man was added to man; link was joined to link. Jesus found Philip, Philip found Nathanael, Nathanael found somebody else, and thus the golden chain lengthened down through the centuries until some one found you and me. This is the true apostolic succession: each disciple finding another, and thus propagating and widening the grace of Christ. It is interesting to study how Christ worked. He did not begin and carry on his work as we would have thought. He did not go to Jerusalem, the civil and religious metropolis, and there build a great tabernacle seating four or five thousand people and preach to packed audiences. On the contrary, he went into the obscure parts of the country and engaged in his work quietly and privately, trying to keep down excitement and avoid crowds. He preferred to meet with people in small groups. It seemed that he would rather sit down and talk with one man than preach to five thousand. It is true that he did gather multitudes and preach public sermons; and these great open-air meetings were a powerful means of spreading the gospel. But it is a remarkable fact that no conversion is recorded as having taken place under the public preaching of Christ. Doubtless there were such, but no such convert is definitely named. He picked up his disciples one at a time through personal

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interviews; it was in this way that he got Nicodemus and the woman at Jacob's well. His best work was not machine work in which the people were ground through all alike, but hand work in which each one received a personal touch. When he preached to a crowd he might not get anybody, but when he talked with one he was sure of his man. He did not try to shake the apples down in a mass, but he picked them off one at a time; and hand picked apples are always the best. Most of the conversions in the Bible were due to personal work. When we find a new convert, in that immediate connection we find somebody at work. Back of the converted Nathanael we find Philip, and back of the converted Philip we find Christ.

All growth takes place atom by atom, all work is done piece by piece. Here is a beautiful exhibition of chemical activity. A plate of glass is dipped in a solution of silver salt and placed in a magic lantern which throws a magnified image on a canvas in a darkened room. At first nothing is seen but a great circle of light. Presently a peculiar formation appears on one edge of the circle and we can see that beautiful crystals are forming. This process moves steadily across the canvas, the line of crystallization being sharply defined. Now what is going on there? Each atom as it falls into its place in a crystal reaches out and pulls in the next atom; it says to its neighbor, Come along with me; these crystals are a more perfect form for us. And along it goes, and at the same moment it reaches back and pulls after it the next one. And thus the line moves majestically across the field until the whole circle is a gleaming mass of crystals. The salt is crystallized atom by atom. How does a tree grow? Right under the bark is a layer of cells. In the spring each one of these cells puts forth another cell and thus a new layer is formed around the tree. A second layer is formed in

the same way, and then a third, and this is usually as far as a tree can go in one summer. These three layers of cells form a year's growth or ring, and this process is repeated each year. Every cell in that tree has made another cell, and thus the oak has grown from the tiny acorn into the mighty mass of living wood. A tree grows because every cell in it finds another. It is thus that Christ's kingdom grows. As that line of crystallization swept across the canvas, so is the line of conversion to sweep across the home and community and country and world. As the tree grows by each cell's pushing out another cell, so is the gospel tree whose seed is as a grain of mustard seed to grow until it overshadows the earth. Each believer is to find a sinner and by personal influence lead him to Christ. There is something in personal presence and appeal that touches and moves with power. Public discourses, general appeals, are shared in common with many others and thus lose personal point. But when heart touches heart in private interview, personal influence is at its strongest and best. We may envy the power of the gifted preacher, but the Sabbath-school teacher and every Christian has a surer power in personal influence. As Christ found Philip and Philip found Nathanael and some one found us, so we are each one to find the next one, and thus keep the chain of the kingdom lengthening until it shall bind Christ's first with his second coming.

## XI

### WATER TURNED INTO WINE

And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: and Jesus also was bidden, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when the wine failed, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. And Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. Now there were six waterpots of stone set there after the Jews' manner of purifying, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the ruler of the feast. And they bare it. And when the ruler of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and knew not whence it was (but the servants which had drawn the water knew), the ruler of the feast calleth the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man setteth on first the good wine; and when *men* have drunk freely, *then* that which is worse: thou has kept the good wine until now. This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed on him.—*John 2: 1-11.*

THE first miracle of Jesus was not wrought until he was well entered upon his ministry. He was not impatient to begin this kind of work, but held his power in reserve until his hour was fully come. And when he did begin he did not scatter supernatural works with a free hand on every side. Miracles did not drip from his fingers. On the contrary, he used them sparingly and kept them in the background. He refused to perform wonders for the purpose of creating sensations and attracting crowds, but worked miracles only for ethical ends. The Bible does not swarm with miracles, but, when we consider the thousands of years its history embraces, they are scarce in its pages. God

does not seem to like a miracle. He prefers ordinary methods and can find as much room for working inside of regular laws as outside in extraordinary processes. Too many miracles would defeat the very purpose of miracles. Yet miracles have a place in the plan of redemption, and Christ used them. There is no difficulty in believing in miracles, if we believe in God and see a sufficient purpose back of them. Who knows where the natural leaves off and the supernatural begins? Are not these two orders of events simply different sections of the same curve, the equally systematic and purposeful expressions of the same will? Miracles are not lawless leaps or breaks in the kingdom of law, but are component parts of a larger system, arcs of a higher curve. They may be only the budding of deeper laws that will yet flower out in our life, rare solitary blossoms creeping up through the snow of winter as hints and prophecies of the full glory of the coming summer. Do not miracles simply mean that matter is everywhere pervious to spirit and suppliant to the mastery of will? Miracles attended the ministry of Jesus as the signs and proofs of his divinity. They were sparks flashing out from his omnipotence. But deeper still, they were illustrations of his power to heal and save. They were works of beneficence and were vital parts of his gospel. The hand of Jesus was potent as lightning, and yet it never touched a human hair with harm, but was as safe and gentle as a mother's touch to her babe. His physical miracles were mere shadows of the spiritual miracles he works within the soul and in society. Viewed in this light, this first miracle of Jesus was especially significant, for it foreshadowed the whole character of his ministry. The first miracle of Moses was turning water into blood; this symbolized the old dispensation, which was one of law and judgment. The first miracle of Jesus was turning

water into wine; and this symbolized the new dispensation, which is one of larger liberty and richer life.

1. The scene opens in a home and the occasion was a marriage festival. From the Jordan, with his five or six disciples, Jesus went to Cana of Galilee, where a wedding celebration was in progress at which his mother was present and to which he and his disciples were invited. His presence on this occasion is richly significant. By this act he at once set himself in bold contrast with his forerunner, John the Baptist. Jesus was not a recluse and an ascetic, separating himself from his human kind, but he was a man of the world, mingling in its currents and sharing in its scenes and festivities. The Christian is not to keep himself out of the world, though he is to keep himself unspotted from the world. He is to be in it, but not of it. The Christian ought to share in all pure joys and enjoyments. To be saved is not to be sad. Satan has no monopoly of pleasure. Christ came that our joy might be full. This festal scene was in a home. It was not in a dance hall, or theatre, or club-room. There is something wrong with the home, or with the people in the home, when they must go away from it to have a good time. However happy we may be elsewhere, there should be no place like home. It was a wedding that Jesus sanctioned and graced with his presence. This relation, that was first consummated in Eden and has so often been disordered and broken by sin, is strengthened, enriched and beautified by the gospel. Jesus had no home of his own, but he came to bring joy into the homes of others. The ministry that ended with the cross began with a wedding, and this bright beginning was prophetic of its final fruitage in the eternal joy of the marriage supper of the Lamb.

2. The joy of the occasion was suddenly threatened. The wine failed. The wine of this world always does

fail. Any joy that rests on a material basis cannot last. Only a well of water within us springing up into everlasting life can afford us never-failing satisfaction. Evidently this was not a home of wealth, and perhaps the arrival of unexpected guests had exhausted the moderate supply. The mother of Jesus was quick to appreciate the situation and feel the embarrassment the failure would cause the host. With delicate tact she said to Jesus, "They have no wine." This reveals the sympathy of Mary with others in distress. As we look out over the world in all its ignorance and poverty and suffering and sin, upon the hard lives and pitiful condition of our human kind, of how many can we say, They have no wine; and if there is any way in which we can supply their need and brighten their lives, how sympathetic and urgent should we be in using the means to this end? Mary in applying to Jesus went to the right source, and we can do most for the world through him. The mother's gentle hint to her son drew a strange answer from Jesus. His reply, however, contains not the slightest courtesy, but is an intimation that his power cannot be used at the suggestion of another, even of his own mother, and that at the right moment he will act of himself. We must beware of the faintest appearance of dictating to Christ and must never try to hurry him up. The mother was satisfied with the answer, and in a spirit of profound and beautiful trust she directed the servants, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." This is the bond of unquestioning obedience that binds the Christian to Christ. We have attained the highest wisdom and the purest peace and the strongest strength when we simply know and do his will. This solves perplexities and makes our pathway plain.

3. Presently the moment for action came. Even when God seems to be denying us, the blessing may be near.

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Six large stone jars, holding half a barrel each, were standing by. Jesus ordered them to be filled with water, and the servants filled them brimming full. Then at his bidding they drew it out and bore it to the ruler of the feast. At some point in this process "the conscious water saw its God and blushed," the water reddened into wine. Into the inner mechanism of this miracle we cannot penetrate, but it is no more mysterious than the chemistry by which water is turned into wine inside the grape. Jesus did in a moment what the sun does in a month. He who makes the sun ripen wine can make the wine without the sun. Very practical lessons lie around this point in the miracle. Jesus can supply all our needs. Our extremity is his opportunity. When the wine of this world has failed and life looks dark, he can give us a blessing that will be as wine to our spirits. In giving us this blessing he makes use of what we have. He took the jars and water that were in the house and with these he made wine. When God would give us more he always begins with what we have. He takes our present powers and means and opportunities and turns them to higher uses and richer results. And in this process we have a part. The servants filled the jars with water and drew out the wine. Had they put no water in, no wine would have come out. God has a part for us in all his processes, and in all the blessings he gives us we are co-workers with him.

4. The wine, when tasted by the ruler of the feast, was found to be so fine in flavor that it excited his surprise and drew from him a compliment to the bridegroom for his generosity in providing such good wine at the end of the feast. It was customary at such feasts, when the guests had drunk freely and their taste was less discriminating, to offer them wine of inferior quality: "but thou hast kept the good wine until now." All that Christ

gives us is of the best quality. He offers us no cheap goods, he palms off on us no adulterated blessings. He gives us the best his market affords, and his market is the universe, his resources are the unsearchable riches of God. Christ's grace is the richest wine in all the world, as precious and costly as his own life-blood. And he gives his best wine last. The devil gives his best wine first: at first it giveth its color in the cup and goeth down smoothly, but at the last it biteth like a serpent. The first end of sin is always pleasant: it is the last end that stings. The Christian life grows better and better. It begins on earth and may pass through suffering, but it ends in heaven.

5. This beginning of miracles did Jesus, and manifested his glory. His glory was seen in this work of beneficence that ministered to the comfort and joy of men. He came that the world might have life and have it more abundantly. His glory was shown in transforming a common and coarse into a rare and rich blessing. Water changed into wine is a symbol of all Christ's transforming work. He changed the old dispensation of law and letter into the new dispensation of liberty and life. He uplifts slavery into freedom and paganism into Christian civilization. He transmutes sin into penitence, unbelief into faith, the vileness of wickedness into the beauty of holiness, and sinners into saints. All that Christ touches he exalts and ennobles. He brings out the best possibilities that are in men. Under his divine chemistry the wilderness of this world shall rejoice and blossom as the rose and become a new Paradise of God. In all these transformations is seen the glory of Christ, as in all the wealth of color on the landscape is seen the glory of the sun. "And his disciples believed on him." Had they not believed hitherto? Yes, but now their faith was deepened and strengthened. Faith is a matter

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of degrees, and it grows through experience and confirmation. Andrew and Peter, John and Philip and Nathanael believed on Jesus down at the Jordan, but now, having seen this miracle, they were sure of him. The roots of faith struck deep into their souls. It is as we see the glory of Jesus shed abroad in the world ennobling everything it touches, and especially as we experience it in our own hearts, that our faith grows trustful and masterful, and we exclaim with our deepest conviction and holiest love, Lord, we believe!

## XII

### A DISTINGUISHED NIGHT VISITOR

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came unto him by night, and said to him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born anew. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou the teacher of Israel, and understandest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and bear witness of that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you heavenly things? And no man hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, *even* the Son of man, which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him. He that believeth on him is not judged: he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil. For every one that doeth ill hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works

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should be reproved. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God.—*John 3:1-21.*

**I**T is night, and Jesus is closeted with one man. One soul with the great Preacher was a great audience. Two of his greatest discourses were delivered to solitary hearers—Nicodemus and the woman of Samaria. Public preaching has its place and power, but the private interview and personal word can never be dispensed with. This first recorded discourse of Jesus is compact with the great principles and duties of salvation. Christ's theology was complete from the beginning.

1. The inquirer that sought this interview is an interesting and attractive character. He was a Pharisee and a Rabbi, a member of the Sanhedrin and a man of wealth. He was therefore a man of the highest religious orthodoxy, of unblemished reputation, of profound learning, and of influential social position. He was one of the foremost men in Jerusalem. He had heard Jesus and seen his miracles, and he came to him by night. The night visit has been used against him as implying timidity or something worse, but this is not a sure inference. There may have been good reasons why it was convenient and even necessary for him to see Jesus at this time. Yet it must be admitted that through his whole course Nicodemus at least displayed that discretion which is the better part of valor, and it was not until after the crucifixion that he came out boldly as a follower of Jesus. The remarkable thing, however, was that this prominent Rabbi should visit the obscure Galilean, who had so fearlessly attacked existing institutions, at all. This in itself was an act of courage and it showed a candid spirit of inquiry after the truth. This spirit was further manifested in the testimony with which he greeted Jesus. He addressed him as Rabbi and de-

clared him to be a teacher come from God. This shows that he was already profoundly impressed with the mysterious Galilean. Doubtless his thought was that, as an orthodox Jew and conspicuous Rabbi, he was entitled to a chief place in the kingdom which Jesus was proclaiming, and that all he had to do was to offer himself and be accepted. And what a splendid convert and powerful accession to the cause of the lowly Nazarene he would have made? Would not an alliance with such an influential Rabbi have in it the promise and potency of speedy success? The temptation of Jesus did not end in the wilderness, and it may be that this perilous thought pressed itself upon his mind on that memorable night.

2. How did Jesus receive his distinguished visitor? With the bold and brusque declaration that he must be born again. He took no notice of his flattering compliment. He paid no deference to his orthodoxy and learning and social standing, and made no bid for his support. He no more relaxed the principles of his kingdom for this powerful Rabbi than he did for illiterate and profane fishermen. On the contrary, he insisted on a new birth as the necessary condition of entering the kingdom of God and inflexibly applied this principle to Nicodemus himself. Nicodemus stood high in the church, he was learned in the Scriptures, no stain was upon his professional robe, but he was not fit for Christ's kingdom. It is possible to be much, and yet to be nothing; to know the Bible, to sit at the communion table, to stand in the pulpit, and yet not know Christ. The man that is highest in the church may be lowest in spiritual life. This is terrible business, and it is a danger that besets every soul. Outward forms, church membership, the highest respectability, unblemished morals, do not make a Christian: only a new heart does this.

Christ did not come to reform human nature, to gild it and make it appear respectable, but to recreate it into a new creature.

3. Nicodemus was puzzled. He ought not to have been, for the Old Testament tells of a new heart, and the Rabbis had a saying that a convert was "like a child new born." Yet Nicodemus, a master in Israel, did not know what Christ was talking about and revealed his slow apprehension in his question about the new birth as though it were a gross material absurdity. Jesus explained that the new birth is one of water and of the Spirit. The Spirit is the creative cause of regeneration and the water of baptism is the outward sign. The inner change is invisible and secret, but expresses itself in fruits that are visible and public. This was an intimation to Nicodemus that he could not become a secret disciple of Jesus, if he had any such thought. Jesus now proceeded to throw further light upon this spiritual fact by bringing it into line with natural law. It is only a special case of the universal law that like must come from like. Flesh begets flesh and spirit begets spirit. This proves the hopelessness of ever developing a saved man out of a lost man by a purely natural process. Higher life may reach down and lift up lower life, but the lower can never of itself press up into the higher. Only spiritual life can make a spiritual man, and spiritual life comes only from God. This is an eternal law which can no more be broken than gravitation. The new birth is a mystery in its inner nature, but we need not marvel at it on this account, for our whole life is margined and mingled with mystery. The very wind eludes our observation and soon baffles our profoundest science. We can see its effects, but cannot discern its subtle processes and its far-away causes and consequences. So the new birth manifests itself in outer effects, but hides its inner

nature. The same laws run through the natural and spiritual worlds, and things on earth are copies of things in heaven. Religion is not a mystery peculiar to itself and different from everything else, but it is woven out of the universal elements of the world. Every mystery in religion is paralleled with a like mystery in nature. We do not get rid of mystery by getting rid of religion: the very same mysteries confront us on the sublime face of the universe. Mystery is no bar to action. We eat of the fruit of the tree, though we cannot follow the dextrous fingers that weave its blossoms and cannot trace the cunning chemistry that ripens its sweets. We walk in the sunlight untroubled by the mysteries of solar physics, and we pluck the daisy though it hides from us the infinite secret of life. So we can live the renewed life though we cannot see the renewing Spirit. Thus Christ only hinted at the nature of the new birth by illustration and symbol, and "what he left a mystery, it would be presumptuous in any man to attempt to explain."

4. Still Nicodemus was puzzled. "How can these things be?" was the wondering exclamation that kept escaping from his bewildered mind. Jesus expressed surprise that a teacher of Israel should not know these things. There are many surprising people in the church, people that with all their Bible reading and church going have not yet grasped some of the simplest and most fundamental points of the gospel. Jesus now proceeded to set forth his authority for these truths. He was not a mere philosopher or theorist spinning out personal opinions and guesses at truth; neither was he teaching knowledge that he had gained at second hand; but "we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." Jesus Christ knew what he was talking about. He had personal knowledge of these things; he was an expert

and authority on this subject; he came down from heaven and knew all about it. On all subjects we try to get expert testimony, the best knowledge. To whom shall we go as an authority on character and destiny? Only to the Lord Jesus Christ, for only he has the words of eternal life. Jesus further illustrated his work and kingdom by a figure from the Old Testament Scriptures. The serpent Moses lifted up in the wilderness was a symbol of the Son of Man lifted up on the cross. In the very beginning of Christ's ministry the Cross was lifted up in his teaching. He knew what was coming. He had laid down his life from the foundation of the world. He gave himself that, out of his death, life might come to all that believe in him.

5. Jesus now was the only speaker. Nicodemus had become silent and sat as a rapt listener. Jesus rose to loftier and ever loftier heights. As he sat with this solitary hearer in the silence of the night he uttered some of his sublimest sayings. Presently he uttered that saying that is the richest and most splendid verse in all the Bible. It sweeps the unbroken horizon of salvation. It mirrors the whole sky of redemption, thickset with stars. It gathers up all the notes of the gospel and strikes them in one rich massive chord. It is full of infinities and eternities. It is ineffably bright with divine love, and yet it is edged with divine wrath. Heaven is in it, and so is hell. Jesus ended the interview with the practical admonition, "he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God," and Nicodemus departed. "He that doeth truth cometh to the light," said Jesus to the man that came to him by night. Did this night inquirer ever come to the light? Where do we find him next? Defending Jesus before the Sanhedrin. Where do we find him last? Coming to the burial of the crucified Christ.

"We find him at the Cross and in the light! He has found his way through the night to the morning, from the miracles to the Cross; and there shall all true inquirers be found at last—at the Cross and in the light!"

## XIII

### A CONVERT FROM LOW LIFE

So he cometh to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph: and Jacob's well was there Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. For his disciples were gone away into the city to buy food. The Samaritan woman therefore saith unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a Samaritan woman? (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewst the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his sons, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come all the way hither to draw. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said unto him, I have no husband. Jesus saith unto her, Thou saidst well, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: this hast thou said truly. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. Ye worship that which ye know not: we worship that which we know: for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and

truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh (which is called Christ): when he is come, he will declare unto us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.—*John 4: 5-26.*

**A**NOTHER private interview and another great discourse to an audience of one: this time with a woman. Nicodemus was a great and good man, but this was a bad woman: Christ is no respecter of persons. Any human soul is worth trying to save. The dull rough stone may be a diamond uncut. Jesus had spent most of the first year of his ministry in Judea, of which little is recorded, and was now on his way up through Samaria to Galilee. One day at noon, tired and thirsty, he sat down on the stone curb of Jacob's well. A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and the well furnished the text and the woman the audience for one of Christ's greatest discourses. A well is one of the most useful and delightful things in the world. We look down into its cool mossy depths and see a pool of crystal water, the most beautiful liquid in the world. Nature distilled it out of the clouds and poured it upon far-away hills and filtered it down through gravel and rock and sent it gushing into the bottom of that well. We draw it and it comes dripping up, cool and sparkling, and, as we drink it, it gives us one of the purest and most delicious sensations we can experience, and satisfies and refreshes the whole body. That well is a centre and source of blessing to all around it. The home draws its supplies from it, the children play around it, and there the weary traveller stops to slake his thirst. Winter and summer it never fails, for it has its source near to nature's heart. From such a text in the hands of Christ we may expect a discourse of extraordinary richness and power.

1. Jesus opened the conversation with delicate tact by asking the woman for a drink of water. The smallest things in our daily life open an easy way into the great

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things of the kingdom. The woman expressed surprise that a Jew would ask a favor of a Samaritan, for they were of different races and religious denominations, and she thought that therefore they should have no dealings with each other. Racial antagonisms and religious prejudices are among the deepest divisive lines in the world, splitting the common brotherhood of humanity into warring fragments. The narrow mind thinks that we should hold aloof from those that differ from us and beware of their most friendly advances. The woman's question opened a fine opportunity for a controversy, but Jesus passed it by in silence, for this was just what he wanted to avoid. Had he followed up her question, he would simply have stirred up her race prejudice and partisan zeal, and that would have ended all hope of doing her good. The beginning of controversy is usually the end of edification, and therefore we should avoid it as much as possible in our religious work. Jesus said nothing directly on the subject on which the woman wanted to talk, and yet he reached it indirectly and in the end he closed up the gap. The longest way around is sometimes the surest way there, and in seeking to win others to Christ we must be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. We can seldom do much towards settling racial antagonisms and religious divisions and social disputes and labor disturbances by attacking them directly—this only inflames passion and stirs up strife—but if we can get the spirit of Christ down under them, they will close up.

2. Jesus answered the woman that, if she knew the gift of God, she would ask of him and receive living water. She was close to a great blessing and did not know it. There she was seeking the perishable water of earth, all unconscious of the nearness of the living water of heaven. Is not this a pathetic picture of the blindness

of this world? How often are great riches or blessings near to us, but our ignorance or earthliness veils them from us? Men are seeking for gold, digging deep into the bowels of the earth or climbing far up on the ice-cap of the globe towards the pole, or they spend their days and nights in search of it through business, and yet how often do they fail to see and possess that "gold tried in the fire," the fine gold of God's grace that lies so near in so great abundance? While we are busy running to and fro in our search for wealth and pleasure and power, trying to find some well or stream that will quench our worldly thirst, the well of salvation is just at our feet, and it will freely supply our deepest need. We are smitten with guilty ignorance and blindness if we are so near to the gift of God and do not know it. Jesus himself was the well of living water to which he referred. The analogy between Christ and a well is close and beautiful at many points. The well has its origin in the heart of nature. It is not born of the spot of earth where it is found, but has deep roots and distant connections. It is fed by far-away hills and nourished by the clouds. It is born of the sky and brings heaven's life to bless earth. So Christ has divine roots and eternal relations. He comes out of the heart of the Infinite, a refreshing stream gushing out of the Rock of Ages that brings to us the life of God.

3. The woman, like Nicodemus, misunderstood him and supposed he was speaking of earthly water. She was surprised and puzzled that a travel-stained Jew, who had just himself asked for a drink, should have living water. Whence could he have it? Not out of the well, for he had nothing to draw with and the well was deep. Was he then greater than Jacob that he could supply better water than that great patriarch had found? Jesus again parried her question and kept to the end he had in

view. He refused to be drawn off into side issues and controversial points. Jesus answered, "Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again." The woman was right on one point: the living water that the mysterious Jew offered was not to come out of that well; even Jacob's well could not supply it. The wells of this world furnish water much of which is good and necessary; but it will not quench our thirst so as to keep it satisfied. After we have drawn our buckets up out of these wells full and satiated ourselves with this water, the thirst will come back upon us and torment us more than ever. Man cannot live by the water of this world only, and none are so thirsty as they that try to do so. In contrast with the water that this world gives, Jesus sets the water that he gives. "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life." The outer life is one of the greatest dangers of the inner life. We see around us wealth and fashion and pleasure, and we think that if we only had a well yielding these waters we would be satisfied and happy. So we go about digging wells outside of us in the sand and rock of this world to find this water. But these wells are subject to all the fickle changes of climate and circumstance. Dry weather may cause them to run low and a drought may turn them to dust. Some dislocation of circumstance may crack them and let all the water escape, and an earthquake or disaster may utterly destroy them. Jesus opens a well in the heart that is careless of the weather and is not afraid of a drought. The man of pure heart and rich character can have peace and comfort anywhere, for he carries his well of water with him and within him. The happiest people are not those that have the most comforts outside, but those that have the most comfort inside. The inner

life determines the outer life. Every point on the circumference is pulled into its place by the centre. All the bloom and fruitage of the tree are the outgrowth of one vital germ. Position is vastly less important than disposition. The Spirit of Jesus abiding in the heart is a well of water within us ever springing up into pure and sweet life.

4. The woman now began to understand in a dim way that Jesus had better water, and she asked him for it, though still confusing it with earthly water. She had not yet freed herself from the material and grasped the spiritual. We are so earthy and worldly that it is hard for us to realize that the great things of life are not the things that are seen, but the things that are not seen. Jesus had now reached the point where he could go no further without making her conscious of her deepest need. For this purpose he threw a search-light into her inner life. "Go, call thy husband," he quietly said. The woman put on a bold face and said, "I have no husband." Jesus retorted, "Thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband." This totally unexpected reply struck her like a shot. She suddenly stood revealed in the blaze of the mysterious Stranger's knowledge; and her instant conclusion was, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." Christ cannot go far with us until he touches some sore spot in our lives. The probe must precede the cure. Christ must know all about us in order to heal us. Our secret sins must be brought to light and be cleansed away before his Spirit can dwell in us. And when is it that we perceive most clearly that Christ is a prophet? When he reveals us to ourselves, makes us conscious of our faults and failures, burdens us with a sense of our guilt, kindles in us deep longings and high aspirations; and when we find that he exactly matches our needs and fits into and satisfies our

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life, as the light matches and satisfies the eye: then it is that we perceive that he is a prophet.

5. The conversation was now growing uncomfortably close and searching, and the woman may have thought it was time to change the subject; besides, she thought she saw a chance to have the fierce denominational dispute between the Samaritans and Jews decided. The burning point of this dispute was the place of worship. The Jews said Jerusalem was the only divinely appointed place of worship, and the Samaritans made the same claim for Gerizim; and so the two mountain-tops twenty miles apart were crowned with rival temples, and altar flamed defiance at altar. "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain," she said; "and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Having submitted the point she waited for the prophet's reply, doubtless thinking that her own place of worship would receive a triumphant vindication. What did Jesus answer? He was himself a Jew, and all his patriotic and religious associations centred in Jerusalem. Would he not now declare his own holy city to be the only true place of worship and brand the Samaritan temple as idolatrous? He did nothing of the kind, but gave an answer that was equally startling and disappointing, revolutionary and tragical to both Jews and Samaritans. "The hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father." He delivered the grandest discourse ever uttered on the universality and spirituality of worship. He showed that worship is not a matter of mountains and temples, but of heart and spirit. He wiped Jerusalem off the map as an exclusive centre of worship, and set worship free and diffused it around the world as a universal privilege. In this answer he refused to take either side of the dispute and virtually swept away both sides with a broader principle. De-

nominational divisions and disputes unhappily are not yet ended. More than one denomination openly proclaims itself "the church," and scornfully repudiates all others as irregular and heretical sects. Some excellent persons seem to think that God is a Presbyterian and that Presbyterians are his favorite people; others believe that he is a Baptist, and still others that he is an Episcopalian. Doubtless some of these sectarians think that if the question of these rival sects were submitted to God, he would unblushingly pronounce in favor of their sect and brand all others as excommunicated and lost! But might not a divine judgment bring disappointment and consternation to all sectarians? God has no favorites in the sense some church people think. A blue-blooded Presbyterian or a white-gowned Episcopalian is no more to him than a black-skinned Methodist. He is not interested in deciding our little controversies, but wants us to get away from them to great things and broad principles. God is spirit, and place and technicality and form count for little with him. He looks at the worshipper, and not at the place of worship. Worship is not like some rare plant that grows only on some solitary mountain-top, but it is like grass that grows all over the world. It cannot be restricted to any one's little field or private garden, but it has in it the freeness of the air and the wideness of the world. If we will lift our eyes to the grand mountain of worship, we shall lose sight of the little divisive ravines that lie around our feet. Such worshippers the Father seeks.

6. The woman now spoke in a more modest and teachable spirit. She felt that she did not know much in the presence of such a prophet; and she expressed a belief that Messiah was coming and that he would tell her troubled heart all things. Was she already suspecting that the strange prophet was the Messiah? Jesus had

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now led her up to the point he had in view. The moment for his self-revelation had come; and with simple, noble dignity he said, "I that speak unto thee am he." Here is Christ's first and clearest declaration of his Messiahship. He knew who he was and why he was in the world. There was no self-conscious vanity in this declaration, as it was the truth and it was needful that it should be known. It is not impertinent in the sun that it lets its light shine. Jesus revealed himself to the sin-stricken woman on the point of penitence as a physician reveals himself to the sick and wounded. The moment the woman felt her need of light, the Sun of Righteousness rose upon her. And from his blessed presence she hastened to tell the glad news, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: can this be the Christ?" She had found her way from Jacob's well to the well of salvation; she went for water and she found Christ.

## XIV

### A PROPHET DRIVEN OUT OF HIS OWN TOWN

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the book, and found the place where it was written,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
Because he anointed me to preach good things to the poor :  
He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives,  
And recovering of sight to the blind,  
To set at liberty them that are bruised,  
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down: and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth: and they said, Is not this Joseph's son? And he said unto them, Doubtless ye will say unto me this parable, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done at Capernaum, do also here in thine own country. And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is acceptable in his own country. But of a truth I say unto you, There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land; and unto none of them was Elijah sent, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian. And they were all filled with wrath in the synagogue, as they heard these things; and they rose up, and cast him forth out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might throw him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way.—*Luke 4: 16-30.*

**T**HE first year of Christ's ministry having been spent in Judea, the next year and a half were passed mainly in Galilee. One of the first places he visited was Nazareth, his own home, where he

had been brought up and had lived for nearly thirty years and was familiarly known as a carpenter in the town. Only about a year before he had closed his shop and gone south into Judea, whence marvellous stories had floated back on the tide of returning pilgrims of his cleansing the temple and working miracles and appearing as the Messiah. His arrival in his own village would set all tongues gossiping and create a tremendous sensation in the sleepy old town. Here Jesus opened his public ministry in the north and was quickly driven away, so that in the most literal sense "he came unto his own, and his own received him not."

1. Nazareth was a specially difficult place for him to begin. He had gone away a carpenter, and he had come back a prophet to preach. He was to preach his first sermon in the village synagogue in which he had worshipped from childhood. The people had known him from boyhood and he knew them. As he stood before them he looked into the faces of his friends and neighbors, of his former companions, of his mother and brothers. We may suppose that he rose with the usual embarrassment of a young minister rising to preach his first sermon in his home church before his relatives and friends. Doubtless Mary had a mother's pride in her son. Jesus felt the delicacy and knew the danger of the situation, but he began his ministry at home, where every one's duty begins. "He entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day." It is instructive to notice how Jesus spent this Sabbath. He did not spend it in lounging about, or in pleasure seeking, or in talking business or politics; he had no Sunday newspaper in whose vasty deeps he could drown his spiritual sensibilities; but he went to church. He went "as his custom was," according to his habit. He did not consult his feelings, or look over his wardrobe, or consider the state

of the weather, but he simply went as the regular and right thing to do. There are some things that to be done well must be done habitually. A scholar would not get along well who would debate with himself every morning whether or not he would go to school that day; or a business man, whether or not he would open his store or bank. Neither should we need to debate whether or not we shall go to church. The almanac should decide this question for us. We should go according to the calendar and the clock: not according to our wardrobe and the weather. Jesus went to the synagogue though there were some things there that were not agreeable to him. There were people there that did not like him and were watching their chance to do him harm. And the preaching did not suit him at all. It was intolerably dry and unprofitable. The whole service was formal and lifeless and uncongenial to a true worshipper. The Jewish synagogue was a poor church. One would have thought that Jesus would have stayed away from it and have had nothing to do with it. But "he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue." He did not insist on having an ideal church or none, but he took things as they were and made the best of them. We must not be too sensitive and critical about the synagogue we attend. No doubt there are things in it we would have different. There may be people there that we do not like and that do not like us. The preaching may not suit us, and the prayer-meeting may seem to us hopelessly dull and wearisome. But if on account of these things we stay away from the church, we cannot quote in sanction of our course the example of Jesus Christ. Jesus "stood up to read," he took part in the service. He was not simply a passive listener, absorbing like a sponge, but he had something to say, giving forth like a fountain. The service in our church may be poor simply because we take from it

and contribute nothing to it. Every one should have a part in the praise or prayer or instruction. The church is not a place for rest, its cushions are not couches, but it is a place for activity, and worshipping is working.

2. Jesus chose his first text from the prophet Isaiah. Having read the passage (stopping the quotation at a significant point), he handed the roll of Scripture back to the minister and sat down, according to the custom, to speak. All eyes were fixed upon him, and a breathless hush fell upon the congregation. Only a single sentence of the sermon is recorded, its introductory words, "To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears." This introduction is short and goes straight to the mark. It is not one of those long prosy introductions that give one a tired feeling before any point is reached, but it leaps right into the heart of the subject. It illuminates the text with a flash of light; it gives an ancient truth a modern application; and it puts Jesus himself in the focus of the Old Testament and converges all its rays on him as their burning centre. We could wish that more of this sermon had been preserved, but we are fortunate in having its text, for it is one of the richest Messianic passages in the Bible, striking all the chords of Christ's ministry and full of the music of the gospel. Each of its clauses is deeply significant. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me": Jesus did not hesitate to appropriate this description to himself; the Spirit that was given to the prophets in limited measure and fragmentary gifts was given to him in boundless fullness. "Because he anointed me to preach": the meaning is that Christ is set apart as one who is qualified for the work of salvation. The teacher must have his certificate and the physician his diploma. We will not trust any raw hand to hold the lever of the midnight express. Men must be set apart and trained for skilled service. What certificate of qualification does

Christ have? "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me." He is not rushing blindly into a work which he does not understand, but he is the highest authority and supreme expert on salvation. In committing ourselves to him we are not trusting an experimenter who comes to try his untrained hand at the business of saving us, but we are trusting him who has all power in heaven and in earth. "To preach good tidings to the poor": this is one of the glories of the gospel. Jesus himself, in his answer to John the Baptist in which he massed together the proofs of his Messiahship (Matt. 11: 2-6), put his preaching to the poor last as the strongest proof and climax of evidence. This was a brighter jewel in his crown than his raising the dead. Jesus allowed the rich young ruler to go off, but he bound the blind beggar to himself. When the gospel gets out of touch with the poor, it will have forgotten its mission and lost its power. "To proclaim release to the captives": release was a glad word to the Jews, for they were in bondage to the hated Roman. The gospel means civil liberty, but it means more. The deepest bondage is not without, but within. Fetters bind the body, but sin binds the soul. The worst master we can have over us is an evil disposition within us. A man is not free until he is free in his heart. Glorious freedom is freedom from sin and wide unobstructed liberty to live the life of God. "And recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised:" the world was then full of blind and bruised people, and they instinctively crowded around Christ. At times he had to pick his steps on account of the sick and afflicted that were laid in his path. The moan of sorrow ever smote upon his ear. His ministry was a path of mercy, bright and beneficent as a sunbeam. The world is still burdened with the blind and the bruised. Out over this human sea of sorrow floats the voice of him

whose immortal words have lost none of their music and balm. All these points of light in the text poured their splendor on the day of Christ's coming and made it the acceptable year of the Lord. With such a text, the sermon must have rivalled the sermon on the mount.

3. How was the sermon received? "All bare him witness and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth." This promises well for the congregation, showing that it was an attentive audience. A good sermon depends almost as much upon good hearing as upon good preaching. No doubt there is plenty of poor preaching up in the pulpit, but perhaps one cause of it is the discouragingly poor attention down in the pews. Yet there is something suspicious in the word, "wondered." It suggests mere admiration for rhetoric and elocution, interest in the manner rather than in the matter of the sermon. One of the most barren results of preaching is for people to go out wondering at the sermon rather than worshipping Christ. The next suspicious point in the reception of this sermon is criticism of the preacher. "Is not this Joseph's son?" Appreciation quickly turned to depreciation. They began to judge the preacher by his parentage; they compared his profession of Messiahship with his pedigree and said the two did not match. Because they knew him so well, they thought he could not amount to anything. A carpenter's son never could be a prophet. But it was to the glory of Jesus that he was Joseph's son and a carpenter. It is always easier to criticise the preacher than to practice the sermon. The next point in the reception of the sermon was an unreasonable demand upon the preacher from the people. Jesus read their thoughts and saw that they wanted him to work miracles for them, as he had done elsewhere. They demanded miracles merely for their gratification, and perhaps that they might be hon-

ored equally with or above rival towns. Jesus could yield to no such demand, for this would have reduced him to the level of a mere sleight-of-hand performer. He proceeded to prove to them from their own Scriptures that their privilege as the chosen people gave them no monopoly of salvation, and that, if they did not receive the truth, God would send it elsewhere, even to the Gentiles and leprous heathen. This was too much for their bigotry and pride, and the worshipping congregation suddenly became an infuriated mob that seized the preacher and hurried him off to a cliff that they might hurl him down to death. If we do not like the preaching, let us fly mad at the preacher. If the divine message strikes our pride, let us strike back at the human messenger. If we cannot throw him down a cliff, perhaps we can throw him out of the pulpit; and if we cannot break his head, we may at least break his heart. Still, the matter is not thus so easily ended. We may kill the messenger, but we cannot kill the message. Truth is immortal, and after we think we have slain it, it still lives to confront us. Silencing man does not silence God. And even the persecuted messenger shall not be forgotten of heaven, for Jesus, protected by his own majesty from this murderous mob, "passing through the midst of them went his way."

## XV

## DEEP-SEA FISHING

Now it came to pass, while the multitude pressed upon him and heard the word of God, that he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; and he saw two boats standing by the lake: but the fishermen had gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the multitudes out of the boat. And when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Put out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answered and said, Master, we toiled all night, and took nothing: but at thy word I will let down the nets. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes; and their nets were breaking; and they beckoned unto their partners in the other boat, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. But Simon Peter, when he saw it, fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was amazed, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken; and so were also James and John, sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.—*Luke 5: 1-10.*

“ Clear silver water in a cup of gold,  
It shines—his lake—the sea of Chinnereth,  
The waves he loved, the waves that kissed his feet,  
So many blessed days.”

THE Sea of Galilee, or Lake Gennesaret, lies in the northern part of the Jordan Valley, the river running through it, and is about twelve miles long and six miles wide. It lies in a deep depression six hundred and fifty feet below the level of the Mediterranean and is walled in by mountains from one to two thousand feet high. In shape it resembles a harp, the

broad end lying to the north, whence its ancient name of Chinnereth. Its deep basin makes it subject to sudden and violent storms. Its mountain rim is cut by ravines down which the winds rush and torrents pour, suddenly transforming its placid water into a boiling foaming sea. Now a deserted barren solitude, in ancient times it was a scene of great natural beauty and human activity. Its cool crystal waters shimmered under the clear Syrian sky and rippled over its white beach sparkling with pebbles and shells. Around its shores ran a narrow border of green richly decked with gay tropical blossoms, while its mountain walls were mantled with verdure. Tropical trees and fruits abounded, and the balmy air was scented with fragrance. To the north, in full view, stood Mount Hermon, its summit white with eternal snow, flashing in the sunlight. Its shores were thickset with cities and villages. Four thousand boats whitened its waters with their sails. Its fisheries employed thousands of men. It drew to its shores the merchandise and wealth, the fashion and splendor, of the East, and there Herod built his marble palace and maintained his luxurious court. Its emerald waters, its flowered shores, its purple hills, its splendid cities, its busy industries, made it a scene of surpassing beauty and interest, so that the Jews had a proverb that "God had created seven seas in Canaan, but one only—the Sea of Galilee—had he chosen for himself." This proverb was true in a deeper sense than they knew. For Jesus made this the scene of the greater part of his ministry. Driven from Nazareth, he made his home in Capernaum, one of its cities. From off its waters he called four of its fishermen and made them his disciples, fishers of men. In its cities and villages he taught and wrought miracles, upon its hillsides and shores he preached, in its mountains he rested and prayed. Many of his illustrations and parables were drawn from its

scenes and employments. The whole neighborhood is sacred to his memory and is immortalized by its association with him.

“O Galilee, sweet Galilee,  
Where Jesus loved so much to be;  
O Galilee, blue Galilee,  
Come sing thy song again to me.”

I. From Nazareth Jesus came to Capernaum and entered upon an abundant ministry. Although the people of his own town rejected him and tried to hurl him down a cliff, yet the people of the next town he entered were eager to receive him and pressed upon him in great crowds to hear the word of God. A man may fail in one place and succeed in another. Good men may be failures because they are misfits; in some other field their work would be crowned with success. When driven from one point, let us not give up in despair, but find another and a blessing may come. As the crowd pressed upon him, Jesus extemporized a pulpit out of a fishing boat lying near by, and from its deck faced the vast audience filling the amphitheatre of the shores. The great Teacher knew how to adapt himself to every emergency. Traditional forms of worship did not bind him. Everything had to give way before the one end of reaching the people with the word of God. Doubtless his unconventionality shocked some of the Pharisees and high ritualists who thought his conducting a religious service in the open air from an ill-smelling fishing boat was coarse sacrilege. But Jesus was practicing the great truth announced to the woman of Samaria that worship is not a matter of place and form, but may be offered anywhere. The world is God's great temple and he may be worshipped on any shore or street. A camp meeting may burn with holy fire that is lacking in the stately cathedral. Every man

can have a pulpit and need not go far to find it. Let him take his fishing boat, bench, counter, or whatever his daily occupation, and from it he can preach a living sermon of righteousness and grace that will have power over the multitude.

2. The sermon ended, Jesus bade the disciples launch the boat out into the deep and let the nets down for a catch of fish. The Master thus combined fishing with preaching, business with religion. He was a man of this world and knew how to build a house, handle a boat, and catch fish. Yet he was as truly teaching spiritual truth when he was fishing as when he was preaching. His religion inspired his business, and his business illustrated his religion; and so ought work and worship ever to go together and be fused into one life. Worship with God is the best preparation for business with men. Peter interposed his doubt and objection, "Master, we toiled all night, and took nothing;" as much as to say, "We old experienced fishermen have just tried that place, and we know that there is nothing there." Peter thought he knew what he was talking about. He knew that lake, had been brought up on its blue waters, had fished it from shore to shore, knew all its deeps and shallows, and could tell just where to cast the nets. Jesus was a young man from back in the country, who had had no experience on the lake. Is it any wonder that Peter put his judgment up against that of Jesus and thought his view not unreasonable? Certain it is that at times we are in this state of mind. The world is a great sea whose surface we skim and sail. There are deeps into this sea into which we are afraid to launch out: the deeps of mystery, of hardship, of sorrow, of death, into these we fear to drop our nets. We shiver at these dark depths which we people with horrors and would fain fly to shallow water where we can see bottom. We want to have everything

plain and easy and in full sight. But we cannot have it so in this world. The universe is too vast and deep for us to touch its bottom, and we must drop our nets into depths where we cannot see. God will not let us hug the shore, but at times he drives us out over the deeps of disappointment and suffering and sorrow, for there is something there also that will fill our nets and make us rich. We are closer to Peter's thought when we think our place of work contains nothing of use and interest. We want to catch fish, but we think there are no fish in our sea. We see others pulling up their big-bellied nets swollen with fish, but we think the waters under our boat are empty. It is a frequent thought with us that we can do nothing with our few gifts and pitiful means. If we had more education and more money and a more conspicuous position, better boats and bigger nets and waters swarming with fish, what great hauls we would make! We are sure we would do splendidly if we were only somewhere else: but it is unreasonable to expect us to catch anything where we are, for we have tried these deeps and know that there is nothing in them. So strong is this feeling in us at times that we are almost ready to put our opinion and experience up against the command of Christ and the providence of God.

3. Such was Peter's doubt : now what was his action ? "Nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net." That is a saving and beautiful "nevertheless." Peter was wrong in his thought, but he was right in his action. His creed was faulty, but his deed was beautiful. He thought he knew better than the Master, nevertheless he did the Master's will. Peter here did something that he did not want to do. We want to do what suits us, fits into our convenience, is congenial to our taste, and is thus easy and pleasant for us. Work is neglected, duties are left undone, and opportunities are missed, because we are not

in the mood. Religious duties seems to be especially subject to this principle or lack of principle. The temperature becomes our temptation, and the weather controls our worship. Feeling interferes with faith, and because we do not feel like doing it is supposed to offset and thwart the command of almighty God. This weak flabby principle will never build strong character and make men. Not of such stuff are heroes made. Paul never consulted his convenience after he had consulted his conscience. Peter went fishing when he did not feel like it. A sense of ease never built up a great business, and good taste never started a reform. We must get out of our ease into earnestness. Instead of fitting ourselves to our circumstances, we must make our circumstances fit us. We may not feel like doing it, nevertheless we should let down the net. Peter also here did something that he doubted. Appearances were against getting a catch and he doubted the result, nevertheless he let down the net. All our actions are bordered with doubt. But there may be serious doubts about a course of action, and yet there may be overwhelming reasons for it. There may be grave uncertainty as to how a critical surgical operation may result, and yet it may be the only reasonable thing to do. The Christian life may be bordered and at points even darkened with doubt, and yet it may be the only right path to follow. Men may perish by doubt; the risk is not all on one side. But notwithstanding his lack of feeling and his doubt Peter yielded unquestioning obedience to Jesus. He began to suspect that this young Teacher from an inland town who was inexperienced in the use of nets knew more about the sea than could be learned in a fishing boat. He thought he knew something about fishing himself, but when he balanced his judgment against Christ's command, he gave up his own will, and down went the net. Unquestioning obedi-

ence is the bond that should bind the Christian to Christ. We may question and investigate and find out what is truth, but once it is known and the voice of God is heard, all our little processes of reasoning should stop, and immediate obedience should crown duty with action. We may fear the water is too deep and dangerous for our frail boat, or think that no fish swim in its depths, nevertheless at God's word we should let down the net. Delay only spoils the beauty and the blessedness of obedience, and it blunts conscience. Every duty should be turned into a deed, conduct should never lag behind conscience, but character, conscience and conduct should coincide and flow in one undivided stream. This habit of unquestioning obedience wonderfully simplifies life. It relieves us from looking after providence and managing the universe; it dispels doubt; it releases us from responsibility for results and binds us down only to faithful service; and it inspires discouraging work and makes deep places safe.

4. What was the result of this unquestioning obedience? "And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes; and their nets were breaking." Never had there been such a catch on that lake. It broke all records. Instantly all was intense excitement and activity in the boat. Another boat was called and both boats were loaded to the water's edge. And Peter, the experienced wise fisherman that did not want to go out and was sure there were no fish there, overcome with humiliation, rebuked for his lack of faith, fell down at Jesus' knees, exclaiming, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" Is it not all perfectly beautiful and splendid? Is there not something said in the Old Testament about pouring out a blessing until there shall not be room enough to receive it? Here it is. And the same thing that happened on that Galilean lake on that distant yesterday may happen on the sea of our lives to-day.

Jesus knew what he was doing when he ordered that net let down. He never gives a command blindly, but he sees as deep as the net is to go, and deeper, even to the bottom. And the place that seems empty to us may be fullest of blessing for us. The great deeps of sacrifice and suffering and sorrow into which we fear to drop our nets may hide the richest treasures of God. Up out of these depths we may draw pearls of great price. The place where we may think it is of no use for us to work may be the very best place for us. If we will only fish in our pool patiently, prayerfully, persistently, our nets may at length come up swollen with blessing so that there will not be room enough to receive it. It is not better boats and bigger nets and richer waters we need, but more faith and faithfulness in using the means we have. There may be as deep and rich water under our boat as may be found anywhere. Let us make the most of our opportunities, and our nets will be full. And other boats shall swing up alongside of ours and shall share the blessing.

5. Jesus now turned the miracle into a parable, and made a personal application of it. Christ is always turning the lower things of life into higher meanings, and every common bush is thus afire with God. He said unto Simon, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." To be fishers of men is the duty and privilege, not only of ministers and teachers, but of all disciples of Jesus. The sea is the world, and the net or line is the Gospel: only in catching fish they are taken out of life into death, but in catching men they are taken out of death into life. Many of the arts of the fisherman apply to this work, and we should study and practice that we may become skilled in it. We must study the ways of men, and offer them attractive bait that we may lure them into the Gospel net and bring them into the kingdom,

## XVI

### THE CALL OF FOUR FISHERMEN

From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And walking by the sea of Galilee, he saw two brethren, Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left the nets, and followed him. And going on from thence he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they straightway left the boat and their father, and followed him. And Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness among the people. And the report of him went forth into all Syria: and they brought unto him all that were sick, holden with divers diseases and torments, possessed with devils, and epileptic, and palsied; and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes from Galilee and Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond Jordan.—*Matthew 4: 17-25.*

"And so the Word had breath, and wrought  
With human hands the creed of creeds  
In loveliness of perfect deeds,  
More strong than all poetic thought."—*Tennyson.*

"**F**ROM that time began Jesus to preach:" from what time? From the time John the Baptist was put in prison. The herald of the King had been captured, the King himself must now appear on the field of battle. One rank has been shot down—forward the next rank. Herod was now enraged and rampant, the old Herod blood in him was boiling, and it was dangerous to be exposed to his view. The seizure of John would have been a convenient occasion for some of us to

beat retreat and run under cover. But this was the very time that Jesus emerged from privacy and began to preach. John was struck down and he stepped forward into his place. The kingdom cannot stop because its soldiers fall and gaps are torn through its battle line. The advancing frontier of Christ's kingdom has always been marked with blood. We have fallen on easy times when there is no one to molest us or make us afraid. Paul's brave words, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself," would be empty mockery on our lips. Yet there are still real battles to fight in which we may be brave and strong as though we faced Herod's wrath or the Inquisition's sword. What did Jesus begin to preach? "Repent ye:" just the same message that John preached. The word that was silenced on the lips of John again became vocal on the lips of Jesus. What John was put in jail for saying, Jesus kept on saying. The gospel of Christ is bound to find a voice and get itself uttered. Prisons may stop preachers, but they cannot stop preaching. Repentance is a message too vital to the world's welfare for it ever to be silenced. This is the only message that matches the world's sin and need, and when this voice is no longer heard and heeded the world will be dead. "Repent ye," said Jesus, pressing the sharp personal point of this message home upon every soul. "Change your mind," is what he said. This is something that every one can do, turning his affections and will from things evil to things good. The mind, however, can change only under the pressure and power of a sufficient motive. Did Jesus give any such motive for this change? He did. Did he say, "Repent, or you will be burnt up in hell fire"? He did not, though he might have said this. He said, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He appealed, not to fear, but to hope; he bade men look, not

down into the dark central fires of the earth, but up into the blue sky, and then repent. He set before them a kingdom and said, There is a motive mighty enough to lead you to change your minds. Grander motive than this cannot be conceived. Before the splendors of this kingdom all earthly kingdoms fade and wither into dust. Could we but realize this kingdom we would never sin again and would love the Lord our God with all our souls.

2. Jesus not only preached himself, but he got others to help him. The sun in the sky needs the help of the mote floating in the air, for the sun disperses its light by reflecting it from particles of floating dust and thus turning them into myriads of infinitesimal suns. The Son of God needs the sons of men; the Lord of glory reflects the light of the world from human minds. Jesus has a great message to say and calls upon us to help him say it. Where did he go to find these helpers? Not to where we would have gone; not up to the Temple among the priests and doctors of divinity, nor up to the colleges in Jerusalem; not to the learned and rich and strong; but down to the seashore among illiterate fishermen working with their greasy, ill-smelling boats and nets. Jesus did not call many mighty or many noble, but he chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the mighty. We do not need to be learned or rich or in some high place in order to help Jesus tell his story, but he comes to us just where we are and calls us to his service. As he was "walking by the sea of Galilee," he saw two brothers, Peter and Andrew, washing their nets, and he called them, saying, "Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men." These men had been with Jesus before and were doubtless believers in him in some degree, but they had not yet become professed disciples and perma-

inent followers of his: this marked the hour when they began to share his ministry. A great many people believe in Christ, who have not yet gone after him and made his business their business. "Come ye after me," become like Christ and do his work, is the supreme call of the human soul; this is the heavenly vision that would lure and lift us to a perfect man. These brothers transformed their business in Christ's business, the fishers of fish became fishers of men. The same powers and attainments of mind and body, knowledge of business, skill in the use of means, concentration and earnestness of purpose, that were used in the old service were thrown into the new service. Jesus did not condemn their business, but endorsed it and lifted it to a higher sphere. He thus transmuted every calling. To fishers he said, "I will make you fishers of men;" to shepherds he said, "Feed my sheep;" to vinedressers he said, "Go, work to-day in my vineyard;" to farmers he said, "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest;" to merchants he said, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." No man need go outside of his business to find a pulpit to preach the gospel of Christ: he can turn his plough or his plane into a pulpit, over his counter he can exchange shining spiritual goods, and the humblest toil can be made an earthly parable of heavenly things.

3. How was this call received and answered? "And they straightway left the nets, and followed him." And a little later the other two brothers, James and John, "straightway left the boat and their father, and followed him." They did not claim that business must be attended to first and religion afterwards; they did not plead for delay and tell Jesus that, after the fishing season was over, he would hear from them; but straightway they followed. Faith instantly leaped into fact, conscience

became conduct, and love became life. It was the short sharp action of this "straightway" that saved these fishermen and at last made them such strong men. There is too much lost motion between our call and our coming, our doing lags too far behind our duty. There are too many people that mean to follow Christ after some particular season is over and they have attended to something else first. This indecision, hesitation, delay, is a fatal weakness of character that ravels all life out into nothingness. Many men are lost because they are always meaning to be saved, but never are saved. When you hear the call of Christ, straightway follow him and put your feet in his very footprints. These fishermen left boats and nets behind. They were not so deeply enmeshed in those nets that they could not free themselves from them. They did not try to bring their boats into Christ's business. In entering the new life they cut loose from the old life. They made sacrifices for Jesus. We must not take anything with us out of the world into the Christian life that will encumber us. Too many Christians are still tangled up in their old fishing nets. Leave boats and nets behind. We cannot serve God and mammon. Give Christ your unobstructed service. In a profound sense we must leave all and follow him.

4. Having called helpers to his side Jesus immediately plunged into work, and we are here given a glimpse into the world he leaped into. "All manner of disease and all manner of sickness" and "all that were sick, holden with divers diseases and torments, possessed with devils, and epileptic, and palsied." What a horrid world was that, all disjointed and diseased, full of leprosy and madness, all bleeding and ulcerated, screaming with pain, raving with insanity and foaming and fighting with devilishness—what a shock and horror to our senses and feelings, how we would fly from it and hide it as far as we

could from our sight and sensibilities! Yet this was the world that Jesus found, for this was the world he was looking for and had the deepest sympathy with; he came to seek and save the lost. And so he did not call the righteous and seek fellowship with the rich and strong, but he sought the sinful and the sick. He did not come to the world as a spectator comes to a battle to witness it from some distant height, but he came as the physician and the nurse come upon the field, to minister to the wounded and dying and hear their groans and be spattered with their blood. Too many of us are trying to slip through the world without seeing its sickening sights. We want to live in comfort and luxury and forget the wide weltering misery in the world. We are careful of our gloved hands and spotless linen and tender sensibilities and recoil at the thought of touching a leper or entering a degraded home. But Jesus lived in the midst of such people and drew them to him with a divine magnetism; and we shall never know him and have his spirit until we find this same sick, sinful, sorrowing world and enter it in healing ministry.

5. For what did Jesus do in this strange world that he found, this subterranean abyss of human misery? He taught in their synagogues, he preached the gospel of the kingdom and he healed them. He had something to say in the presence of all this sin and trouble, he had a remedy to propose, a kingdom to set up in the midst of this confusion and anarchy that would establish order and beauty and blessedness. This is the point at which all our human philosophy breaks down and is struck dumb. Philosophers, standing simply on the level of this world and seeing all this frightful turmoil, may look wise and utter swelling words of learned length, but they have nothing to say that is practical and to the point; they have no comforting word and healing touch. Jesus

preached a gospel that is good tidings and set up a kingdom that is life and peace. And it was no mere fine theory that he preached, but a practical power that immediately flowed out through healed bodies and purified hearts. His gospel proved its saving power by the arduous tests of deeds done and his walk through Galilee was a march of mercy. This is "the creed of creeds" he wrought "in loveliness of perfect deeds," and it is this same creed that we are to fashion with our hands. No wonder that the report of him went forth into all Syria, and his fame is still widening through the world.

## XVII

### THE TWELVE DISCIPLES CHOSEN

And the Pharisees went out, and straightway with the Herodians took counsel against him, how they might destroy him. And Jesus with his disciples withdrew to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed: and from Judea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and beyond Jordan, and about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, hearing what great things he did, came unto him. And he spake to his disciples, that a little boat should wait on him because of the crowd, lest they should throng him: for he had healed many; insomuch that as many as had plagues pressed upon him that they might touch him. And the unclean spirits, whosoever they beheld him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. And he charged them much that they should not make him known. And he goeth up into the mountain, and calleth unto him whom he himself would: and they went unto him. And he appointed twelve, that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have authority to cast out devils: and Simon he surnamed Peter; and James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and them he surnamed Boanerges, which is, Sons of thunder: and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alpheus, and Thaddeus, and Simon the Canaanæan, and Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him.—*Mark 3:6-19.*

**T**HIS scene shows us the growing opposition to Jesus on the part of the Jewish leaders, his widening popularity with the people, and the more definite organization of his work in calling the twelve disciples.

1. From the synagogue where Jesus had healed the withered hand the Pharisees strode out hot against him. They were beginning to see that he was not their man. He cared nothing for their professional theology and artificial formalities, but dared to introduce new teach-

ings and new fashions. He shocked their fossilized conservatism with his progressive ideas and methods. They were a proud caste that scrupulously kept themselves separate from others, but Jesus received all classes, and even dared to eat with publicans and sinners. Their hypocritical, ostentatious religiousness could not brook his pure and humble spirit. His teaching was undermining their authority, and his popularity was loosening their hold upon the people. They saw that they could not tolerate such a man. His healing the withered hand on the Sabbath in open defiance of their legalism was the last straw that broke the back of their patience and they went out to make an end of him. Nothing less than his blood would wipe out his offense in their judgment. The men who thought it was wrong to heal on the Sabbath were themselves ready to commit murder. Those that claim to be nearest to God and to have a monopoly of his authority may be farthest from him and nearest to the devil. The greatest crimes have been committed in the name of religion. The disposition is still lurking in us to meet reason with force, and righteousness with wrath. A man seems to be so completely refuted and silenced when his head is off. Yet destroying the man does not destroy his argument, and any truth he taught is immortal and will live to bless the world. It is hard for us to be fair towards one that we do not like. The Pharisees took counsel with the Herodians against Jesus. The Herodians were worldly politicians that supported Herod and were sceptical in religion, and the Pharisees viewed them as traitors and mortal enemies ; yet they joined hands with them in this conspiracy against Christ. Politics make strange bedfellows, and the church and the world have at times formed an unholy alliance to put down reform. The record of the church on slavery cannot be remembered with pride. Southern slave dealer

and Northern doctor of divinity took counsel together to put the Abolitionist down. We may begin to suspect the righteousness of our cause when we must get the devil to help us through.

2. But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples. No principle of duty bound him to stay there and his presence might provoke a violent explosion. There is a time to withdraw from opponents. The other side of bravery is prudence. We can avoid many a quarrel and escape many a danger by quietly withdrawing. Jesus withdrew from the city, but not from service. He went from the hostile city to the hospitable sea, where he was sure of a welcome from the multitude and at least a fishing boat for a pulpit. Marvellous stories of the great Teacher's work and wonders had been wafted far and wide, and the people were assembling from every quarter of the land. Not only were they coming from Galilee and Judea, but they were pouring across the borders from neighboring gentile lands. Jesus near the middle of his ministry was at the high tide of popularity. The Pharisees were against him, but the people were for him. Doubtless the people were mostly drawn by superficial motives, and in time they also fell away. Curiosity was now the main attraction. Curiosity is the entering wedge of knowledge and may open the way for faith. Mixed motives may draw people to church, but no matter, if they are led on to faith and healing. Jesus did not stop to question the motives of the people, but got to work. Healing was the urgent and incessant cry of the multitude. We need not the record to tell us that "he healed many," for we know that he did this always. He was so charged with healing virtue that the people with plagues pressed upon him that they might touch the hem of his garment. It was a wonderful scene that was enacted that distant yesterday on the far Syrian

shore. But essentially the same scene may be witnessed right around us. Jesus is still in the world dispensing healing for every human ill. The most dreadful plague and the root of all trouble is sin in the heart, and this is cured when through the touch of faith we receive his life. There was one class in the multitude, however, for whom Jesus could do nothing: incorrigible spirits of evil. We never read of his healing unclean spirits. They fell down before him and bore witness to his divine sonship, but he refused their testimony and would have nothing to do with them. They were hardened in eternal sin and for them there was no hope. The moral degeneration of the human soul may reach a state of wickedness where there remains no more sacrifice for sin, and the Omnipotent Christ can do nothing. "Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way." Jesus needs no certificate of good character from bad men. It is of no use for such men to testify of him; let them first depart from iniquity.

3. Jesus now goeth up into a mountain and calleth unto him whom he would. Any work cannot proceed far without organization, and Jesus had now reached this point. The work of the Gospel could not be allowed to drift about, but had to be committed to trained men, who would work along definite lines. This mountain scene may be taken as the founding of the Christian ministry. There is a divine call to this ministry and men must not rush into it unbidden. This call usually comes along lines of fitness and opportunity and conviction of duty. Twelve men were selected. Some and possibly all of them had been called and were loosely attached to Christ before, but they were now finally chosen and permanently associated with him. The object of their selection is fully stated. First, "that they might be with him." They were to be with Jesus during the remaining

years of his ministry, that they might be instructed in his doctrines and trained in his methods and filled with his spirit. They were to be put through a theological and practical training for the ministry. They were to be with him that they might become like him. It was only as they had Jesus in them that they could preach Jesus to the world. This is the first and highest preparation for the ministry and for all Christian service. If we have not first been with Jesus we are not fit to be with any one else as teacher and friend. They were appointed, again, "that he might send them forth to preach." Their special privilege in being with Jesus was not for their personal blessing and enjoyment only, but it had an ulterior end in the blessing of others. They were taught that they might teach. What they received they were to give. The Gospel having been received must not be shut up in our own hearts, but must be proclaimed to the world. Everything that Jesus gives us is to be given to others. Freely we have received, freely we must give. Herein is the unselfishness and expansiveness of the Gospel. It is only by giving it that we can keep it. The more of it we give to others, the more of it we have ourselves. Subtracting from it adds to it, and dividing it multiplies it. Preaching the Gospel is the mission of every Christian and the best sermons are living sermons. Again, they were appointed "to have authority to cast out devils." The Gospel in their hands was not a mere theory, but a practical power. They could do the same things that Christ did. His omnipotence entered their souls and streamed out through their hands. At their touch sickness was healed and devils fled. They went through the world turning it upside down, lifting old empires off their hinges, and throwing the centuries into new channels. The Gospel is not simply a beautiful theory to be admired

when dressed up in fine rhetoric in the pulpit, but it is a revolutionizing and regenerating force. It must heal people and cast out devils, or it is of no use in the world. Christians must not be weak sentimentalists, but men of might. They must take hold of wrong and set it right. They must be able to heal sin and cast out devils. But has not the power of miracles been withheld from us? In a small mechanical sense it has, but in a large spiritual sense it has not. "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do."

4. A list of the disciples is given, and we scrutinize the names with interest. By arranging them in three groups of four names each, it is easy to carry them in the memory. Peter always comes first and Judas last. There are two, and possibly three, pairs of brothers among them. This is probably the most important list of names in the history of the world. These men were given a work compared with which founding empires and winning battles and writing books are of small consequence. They were to let loose a force that was to permeate all empires and shape all future ages. Yet they were not great men, and there was not one man of genius among them. They were plain men, unlearned in philosophy. Not one of them belonged to the priesthood, or learned class. They were all obscure men and mostly poor. At least four of them were fishermen, and some of them were expert in profanity. One of them was a despised publican, and one was a zealot, a kind of nihilist of the day. Jerusalem, the chosen city and proud metropolis where were the Temple and priesthood, was not permitted to put one name into this immortal list. One always has attached to his name the dark stigma, "which also betrayed him." Verily not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble, were called, but God chose the

foolish to confound the wise and the weak to confound the mighty. Yet these men so poorly gifted and unlearned and weak in themselves could do all things through Christ, who strengthened them. The very simplicity of the men, unspoiled by human philosophy, made them unobstructed channels through which the grace of Christ could flow in resistless might. The Spirit of Christ touched their souls with eternal issues and made them great. The charcoal needs only a rearrangement of its atoms to become a diamond. The marble block needs only the sculptor's chisel to become an angel. The human soul needs only the transforming touch of Christ's Spirit to become forever pure and beautiful. The humblest men have in them divine possibilities. If we will only heed Christ's call and enter his discipleship, he will endue us with power from on high, and greater works than he did shall we do.

## XVIII

### THE BEATITUDES

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into the mountain : and when he had sat down, his disciples came unto him : and he opened his mouth and taught them, saying,

Blessed are the poor in spirit : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn : for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness : for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful : for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers : for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when *men* shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad : for great is your reward in heaven : for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.—*Matthew 5 : 1-12.*

Down from this Galilean mountain-top  
Rolled words that are eternal laws of life,  
More deeply grounded than its granite base ;  
Flowed strains of sweetness that have power to set  
This inharmonious world in tune, and cause  
Our jarring lives to grow to mellow music.

**T**HE disciples having been chosen, the next step was to deliver the constitution of the new kingdom and announce its programme. After a night spent in prayer, Jesus with the disciples met a great multitude on one of the hills back of Capernaum, and from that lofty pulpit he delivered this sermon that has gone resounding through the ages, and after eighteen

hundred years has lost none of its sweetness and saving power. It is truly a mountain sermon, overtopping all human teachings and breathing the air of heaven. It sets forth the end and outcome of the kingdom of God in holiness of heart and life, though at this early stage it does not fully reveal the means by which this is to be attained. The world has not yet caught up with its simplest requirements. Saturate society with its spirit and the world will be washed pure and the kingdom of God have come. One day filled with it would be a bit of heaven.

1. The first word in this sermon is "blessed," and this is a word the world is eager to hear; but the second word is "poor," and this seems in flat contradiction with the first and is a word the world does not want to hear. The theory of the world was and is that the blessed are the rich and the satiated. But Jesus reversed this and declared blessedness to have its root in a sense of lack. Others had located it outside in worldly possessions and circumstances: he located it inside in the heart. The poor in spirit are those that realize their poverty of soul without righteousness and God; they do not measure their blessedness by outward wealth but by inward worth; they have that humble state of mind, conscious of its sin and need, that makes them receptive of spiritual blessings and brings them into fellowship with God. The blessing pronounced upon such souls is that theirs is the kingdom of heaven. It is only into such souls that this kingdom can come; for by its very nature it is shut out of hearts full of self-satisfied pride. The kingdom of heaven is a present possession, bringing order into the soul, subjecting all its faculties to discipline and obedience, and filling it with heavenly purity and peace. Such a kingdom within the soul is a blessing that abides amidst all the disorder and distress of this lawless world.

2. The next beatitude is even more paradoxical to the

worldly mind. "Blessed are they that mourn." This seems to shock the universal human heart, for in every breast it instinctively shrinks from sorrow; it finds its blessing in the wine of gladness and counts the day of mourning a blighted day. Yet there is a time to weep as well as a time to laugh, and mourning may be a bitter root that will bloom and grow into the fairest blossoms and the sweetest fruits. As long as there is unforgiven sin festering in the heart there is cause for mourning that may issue in purity and peace. Godly sorrow that worketh repentance brings ultimate and lasting blessing. The mourning that springs from loss and sorrow, also, may have in it a root of blessing. It may work faith and obedience, chastening and discipline. Uninterrupted prosperity is not the healthiest atmosphere in which the human spirit can grow; the wine of gladness may intoxicate as well as give good cheer. As pearls are the product of the sufferings of the shell-fish, so the finest jewels of human character are crystallized out of the sorrows of the soul. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall thus be comforted. Jesus came to give this comfort of forgiveness and consolation. He picked his steps among the sinful and sick and sorrowing, and to all such his words were a gracious balm and his touch was healing and life. Isaiah's prophecy (61: 1-3) of the Messiah's mission was abundantly fulfilled in him, and he still stands among men as the comforter of mourning souls.

3. The third beatitude pronounces a blessing upon the meek. This also fell as a strange saying upon ancient ears, for in that age meekness was contemned as weakness, and might was worshipped as right. The Roman especially had small respect for a meek spirit, and gloried in gleaming steel and martial might that could crush opposition and make him master of the world. But Jesus bravely stood up in that world bristling with spears and

calmly said, Blessed are the meek. This Teacher was not subject to the limitations of his age and did not simply voice the opinion of his day, but he was a Teacher for all time and uttered eternal truths. Meekness is humility, gentleness and patience of disposition. It is not puffed up with conceit and ambition and pride; and so it is not easily irritated and inflamed, offended and angered, and thus thrown into a fret of disappointment and a frenzy of passion. It keeps self-possessed and cool, and concentrates all its power into pure purposes. It is not ready to fight on every provocation, but exercises patience and peace. Such a state of soul is in itself an inner fountain ever springing up into blessing. Not only was this beatitude of the meek strange to ancient ears, but the reason Jesus gave for it was stranger still: "for they shall inherit the earth." How can this be? would exclaim the Jewish patriot, looking for an armed and conquering Messiah; and with what scepticism and scorn would the Roman in his polished brass and glittering steel hear this prophecy? Yet the moral evolution of the world is more and more proving that meekness is might. War is disappearing before the peaceful march of industry, and the barbarity of the battle-field is being crowded out by brotherhood. It is not martial France, thirsting for glory, or military Germany, weighted with armor until it can hardly move, that is colonizing and inheriting the earth so much as it is more peaceful England. We make a tremendous mistake if we put our trust in 13-inch guns and costly warships, that are dangerous temptations, and will soon be old iron. Let us develop and maintain the spirit of righteous meekness, and we shall have its omnipotent might and shall inherit our portion of the earth in peace and safety. The lowly Nazarene, who with omnipotence in his hand and legions of angels at his command never harmed the hair of a

human being and did not even lift his hand in self-defense, was right, and in the heart of that warlike age here laid down the foundation of ultimate statesmanship and national greatness.

4. The fourth beatitude is for the hungry and thirsty. All men are hungering and thirsting, but not for the right things. The world offers us bread that satisfies not and has fountains of poisoned water. Some men are feeding on husks that swine do eat and drinking of cups that pour streams of fire into the blood. Jesus Christ is a better friend of ours than to give us such things with which to satisfy our hunger. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness." We instinctively feel that this is a truer beatitude than the beatitude of wealth and wine, and carries us to a purer fountain of blessedness. Righteousness is rightness or straightness of soul, and wrong is the soul wrung crooked. Things always work best when they are right and never work well when they are wrong, and this is preeminently true of the human spirit. Righteousness is thus the highest attainment and fullest satisfaction of the soul, the concord that puts all its powers in time, the bread that feeds all its faculties. The human soul is a jarring discord until it is tuned into righteousness, and then it begins to pour forth strains of blessedness. Hunger after righteousness is a noble ambition with which every soul has a right to be consumed. And all they that have it shall be filled, for this attainment is possible, not simply for a few gifted or fortunate ones, but for all. Other ambitions and cravings may be thwarted and disappointed, for there is not bread enough for them all, but there is enough righteousness to go around and satisfy every hungering soul.

5. Purity of heart is the core of blessedness and the fundamental beatitude. The fullness and richness of its blessings spring from the fact that it enables us to see

God. To see any object we must have the appropriate faculty to grasp it. The blind man cannot see the sun because his eye does not have that kinship with it by which it can tune its delicate vibrations into unison with the sun's mighty pulsations and thus share its glory. In like manner the unimaginative inartistic soul cannot perceive the beauty of a poem or painting because it does not have the appropriate organ of vision. An unloving selfish soul cannot feel the fine charm of a generous deed, and a wicked man cannot see the beauty of holiness. A pure heart is the eye of the soul that sees God. Purity is the soul's affinity with God by which it vibrates in unison with his light and love. The pure soul that is thus ready to tremble into music at the presence of goodness, that may know little but loves much, may know more of the real nature of God than the proud philosopher who can spin a profound theory of his metaphysical constitution. Purity of heart is the soul's sensibility to God, and feels its way most deeply into his infinite heart. Therefore it shall share the beatific life of God as the sensitive eye shares the glory of the sun. As the beauty of the poem and the painting passes into the artistic soul, so shall the blessedness of God pass into the pure heart and fill it full.

6. This strange procession of beatitudes grows most paradoxical as it comes to its climax. Persecution steps into the line and asks us to believe that it brings us a blessing. The persecuted and reviled and those that have all manner of evil said against them falsely for Christ's sake are blessed, for theirs also is the kingdom of heaven. Such persecution disciplines the soul in self-possession and patience and forgiveness; it roots one more deeply in righteousness and toughens his spiritual fibres as the storm roots the pine and toughens the oak. All our blessings have been bought with blood, and the kingdom

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of heaven is no exception. Persecution has ever been its price, and these terms are still exacted of many a faithful soul. If fires are not kindled around us with fagots, persecution may grow hot around us with evil tongues and reviling words. Such persecution puts us in good company. Prophets and reformers have always trodden this fiery path, strewn with burning coals and bordered with flames. Jesus was reviled and gave a sublime example of purity and patience as he reviled not again. Duty is often a lonely path, but it links us with many a saint that has trodden the wine press alone. Persecution is never pleasant, but nevertheless when it is patiently borne afterwards it yieldeth the peaceful fruits of righteousness.

These are the beatitudes of Jesus. They are a strange contradiction to the maxims of this world, but they are heavenly wisdom. They have rough shells without, but they are full of sweet milk within. They are shunned by the worldly mind that judges and is deceived by appearances, but the spiritual mind that penetrates to their core finds that they are the eternal laws of blessedness.

## XIX

### OUR FATHER'S CARE

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment? Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than *they*? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto his stature? And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he not much more clothe* you, O ye of little faith? Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.—*Matthew 6: 24-34.*

“And I will trust that he who heeds  
The life that hides in mead and wold,  
Who hangs yon alder's crimson beads,  
And stains these mosses green and gold,  
Will still, as he hath done, incline  
His gracious care to me and mine.”

*—Whittier.*

THE Sermon on the Mount is intensely practical and fits down into our daily needs. Anxiety for the future is one of the most frequent and fretting cares of life. This cloud is rarely absent from our sky, flecking its distant horizon with ominous specks and streaks, or thickening up into a black, impending storm. It spoils much happiness and in many ways does

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us harm. Our Saviour pours upon this cloud some of his most splendid thoughts, that he may dissolve it and leave our sky clear and bright.

1. Attempting to serve two masters throws life into discord and strife. No man can serve two masters that are diverse in kind and character. He will either hate the one and love the other, or, reversing this relation, he will hold to the one and despise the other. One can serve various interests and masters if they sustain relations of subordination and cohere in one harmonious system, but he cannot serve antagonistic interests or more than one supreme master. Any such divided service will inevitably result in disloyalty to one master or the other. The mind may have many subordinate ends, but it can have only one supreme end, as the solar system can have only one centre. The soul must revolve around one master purpose, and if it tries to have two such purposes, one will subtly and surely dominate the other. Divided service distracts the soul. It introduces confusion, and weakens and wastes life at every point. The soul can have peace and power only as all its aims and energies flow forth in one solid stream. The man that tries to do two contradictory things will more or less fail in both. The beauty of a crystal depends upon its unity, and the strength and beauty of life depend upon singleness of purpose. Such a life may have countless interests and aims, but they all are variations of one supreme purpose and blend into one harmony, as all the notes of the orchestra are related to one key-note and melt into one music. Jesus applied this principle of the unity of life to God and mammon, or wealth, and declared that we cannot serve them both. The meaning is, not that a man cannot be a Christian and a rich man, but that he must be a follower of Christ first and a follower of wealth second; he cannot push both of these interests into the

first place in his life, but must keep one in subordination to the other. This impossible thing is an unwritten article in many a professing Christian's creed, and it proves its impossibility in the overmastering strength of his worldly aims and the fruitlessness of his Christian life.

2. The conclusion that Jesus draws from this principle is that we should give up serving mammon by ceasing to be anxious for our life on its material side, what we shall eat and drink and wear. His admonition does not forbid our taking thought for our life, for the power of foresight and plan is one of our highest faculties and shapes life at every point. The root of many a man's trouble is that he does not take thought for his life, but lets it run loose. The word, which (with the negative) is translated in the Authorized version, "Take no thought," and in the Revised, "Be not anxious," means to be divided, distracted, and hence to labor under distressing anxiety, which is the thing forbidden. None of the arguments and illustrations here used by Jesus implies that we are not to plan and labor with reference to our future needs and bodily life, but they are all aimed at distracting thought and fretting anxiety; they are intended to stop, not our working, but our worrying. This anxious thought for our bodily life is probably the most universal and distracting care in the world. Not only is it a terrible problem to the man or woman to whom to-morrow's bread is an unknown quantity in the equation of life, but it frets all our lives and may torment the rich and fashionable as much as it does the poor and distressed. Many that now have a sufficiency let their imagination people the future with spectres of want. Any man may drive himself crazy by simply brooding on what may happen. The pampered children of fortune and fashion spend their most anxious thoughts on food and drink and dress. They give more attention to their clothes than to their

character, and a hat or bonnet that would violate the latest fashion-plate of Worth would be with them a graver offense than a word or deed that would violate some of the ten Commandments of Moses. This canker-ing care kills off the higher life and the spirit is absorbed into the flesh. One cure for this evil is the consideration that the life is more than food and the body than raiment. The implication is that we should give more care to the inner life than to outer conditions, to the soul than to circumstances. A better soul will soon make better circum-stances, but better circumstances will not necessarily make a better soul. "The soul of improvement is the improvement of the soul." The chief emphasis should be put upon the spiritual state of the soul, for this is the vital centre that determines every point on the circumference of life. If we will only see that our souls are right, all things else will come right of themselves. It is also implied in this truth that God, who gave us our life, will so order his Providence that our bodily needs shall be supplied. The greater gift includes the less, and he who gave us life so precious that his only Son died to redeem us, will withhold from us no good thing.

3. The great Teacher now illustrated and proved his point by appealing to the Bible of nature, and adorned his speech with quotations from the sky and field. Standing in the open air with this great book spread out before him, he called attention to the birds as they floated and soared around in their circling flights, sowing no seed, reaping no harvest, owning no barns, yet so free from care and happy in their blithesome lives, fed by the heavenly Father. "Are not ye of much more value than they?" was the pointed and telling application. Next he called attention to the flowers blooming around and mantling the mountain in a garment of rich embroidery and gorgeous colors: they do not weary and worry them-

selves with toil, and fretting does not spoil their beauty; and then pointing to one blossom, he declared that even Solomon, the most splendid figure in Jewish history, in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Again the application followed with irresistible logic, "Shall he not much more clothe you, O, ye of little faith?" These illustrations must be held to the point in hand and not allowed to stray off to points they do not have in view. They illustrate the fact that the world is a system of law and of love, in which no atom slips from its place, every instinct is mated with its appropriate end, and provision is made for every living thing. The bird finds the air waiting for its wings, and nuts and berries ripening for its food. Its life is tuned to music, and it seeks its mate and builds its nest and rears its brood and sings its life away. The flower pushes its green stem up through the earth to find air and shower and sunshine and all the stars, the whole universe, waiting to minister to it and clothe it with gorgeous garments of white and scarlet and gold. When we look upon the beautiful order of nature and bathe our senses in its perfection, we cannot but think, spite of its pains and terrors, that it is saturated with intelligence and palpitates with love. Will God arrange the world for birds and flowers and forget his human children? Shall the instinct of the bee find the end that mates its need, and the cry of the human heart for a Father die away unheeded? Man refuses to believe this and sees a Father's hand in all the arrangements of the world. The lesson that Jesus enforces is that we should trust this filial instinct and live as children in our Father's house. If we are true to his laws, as are the birds and flowers, the whole world will wait on us, our Father shall feed and clothe us, and our lives, also free from fretful care, shall be set to music. "He guides me and the bird."

4. Another consideration against this cankering care is its uselessness. It is useless to man, for "which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto his age?" The length of our life is dependent in some degree upon our wise forethought and care, but this distressful anxiety cannot prolong life, but really shortens it. Work invigorates, but worry kills. Fretting over the future contributes nothing to the solution of its problems: it frightens away no danger and it gathers up no energy and bravery to meet impending trials; not one day or hour does it add to one's life. On the contrary, it fritters away one's strength and courage, breeds discouragement and despondency, lowers vitality and shortens life. The amount of time and energy that some people waste in worrying, if spent in judicious working, would roll burdens off their path and banish the spectres of the future. Equally useless is this undue anxiety to God, "for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Our worrying does not help God to help us, or hurry him up, but our working does. Our fretfulness only hinders him by putting us out of tune so that he cannot blow his music through us. We enable God to do the best for us when we do our part and then simply trust him for the rest.

5. The grandest and surest cure for anxious care, like the best wine, Jesus brings forth last. "But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." This is the expulsive power of a higher and stronger affection; this is looking up and seeing a heavenly vision that will lift us and lure us on; this is hitching our wagon to the stars so that we shall be drawn by cosmic forces towards celestial ends. Our anxieties mostly fasten on small things that lie close to the earth, petty matters of business and bread and fashion and pride: these get into our eyes like grains of

sand and irritate and inflame them. We should get up out of this dust to some mountain height where we can see the splendor of the sky and the stars of eternity. We should crowd these petty cares out of our hearts with great ideals and noble aspirations that will fill us full and lift us up and leave no place for worry. Many a man spends his days in moody and morbid despondency until some great idea and ambition seizes him: then he knows worry no more, and all his days are caught up in a celestial current of enthusiasm. Jesus sets before us such an idea and ambition in the kingdom and righteousness of God. If we see this heavenly vision in its true splendor and come under the sweep of its power, our petty cares will be blown away as dust and we shall lose ourselves in this divine life. The kingdom, also, will bring with it "all these things": they shall be thrown in extra. How much this may include we do not know, but we know it will include as much of this world's goods as our Father knows is best. Thus Jesus brought some of his greatest and grandest teachings to bear against this apparently little sin of worrying. It is useless and harmful, distrustful and atheistic, and we should strive with all our might to quit it.

## XX

### HOW JESUS DEALT WITH JOHN'S DOUBT

And the disciples of John told him of all these things. And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to the Lord, saying, Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another? And when the men were come unto him, they said, John the Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another? In that hour he cured many of diseases and plagues and evil spirits; and on many that were blind he bestowed sight. And he answered and said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good tidings preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in me.—*Luke 7:18-23.*

“ Let knowledge grow from more to more,  
But more of reverence in us dwell;  
That mind and soul, according well,  
**May** make one music as before,  
**But** vaster.”

—Tennyson.

**J**OHN the Baptist had been in prison something like a year in a lonely fortress down by the Dead Sea. Jesus was up in Galilee, moving around among the villages with a few disciples, preaching. John fell to musing on this situation, and, as a result, a painful doubt began to grow in his mind as to whether Jesus was the Messiah. Several causes produced this doubt. He was in prison and had been there long enough to fall into a prison mood. Hope does not burn brightly there. Why should he be left lying there in useless helplessness? Why did not Jesus take some step towards obtaining his release? No wonder that in that damp and dusky place

the world looked dark to John and that the checkered shadows on the stone walls turned to ghostly spectres. This was the state of things inside the prison: what was the state outside? Dark enough in itself to produce doubt. Up in Jerusalem the Pharisees were strangling the life out of religion with their bigotry and hypocrisy. Up in Galilee the court of Herod was living riotously and flaunting its scarlet sins shamelessly before the people. And what was Jesus doing about all this? Apparently nothing: only going about and preaching in fishing towns and country villages. Where were the axe and fan and fire of judgment that John himself had promised the Messiah would bring? They were not in evidence. On the contrary, Jesus had turned out to be patient, tolerant, mild, genial. He had abandoned Jerusalem and seemed unconcerned about Herod and his court; he had apparently forgotten his forerunner lying in the Black Tower and was content to spend an easy life preaching little sermons to insignificant fisher folk. A genial Christ was not what John wanted: that fiery prophet wanted a Christ that would come with axe and fire to chop things down and burn them up. Under the convergence and pressure of all these facts John himself, who had introduced Jesus and vouched for him, began to doubt whether he were the Christ. That John doubted Jesus is the astonishing fact that stands out in this narrative, and it is an honest Book that boldly writes this damaging fact down upon its pages.

1. Here is the fact that a good man may fall into doubt. It is often supposed that good men are always free from this perplexity and pain. Their faith is thought to be a garment without seam that fits their minds snugly and gives them undisturbed comfort. It would be counted a scandal that a minister should be troubled with religious doubt, and shocking to attribute it to an inspired prophet

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or apostle. Doubt has generally been closely connected with damnation. It has been regarded as a sign of insincerity and dishonesty, or at least of unwillingness, in knowing the truth, and as a symptom of some secret sin in the heart. So ecclesiastical authorities have had small patience with it, and have often brusquely and almost brutally branded it as a bad thing. Now doubt cannot be considered a good thing as a final state of mind, but it may be good as an early stage in the development of truth. It was a good thing when men began to doubt whether the earth was the centre of the solar system, for that doubt was the withering of a great error, and the budding of a great truth. It is certainly true that doubt may be an honest state of mind, and therefore it is not always a guilty thing. It may grow out of an unwilling heart or a wrong life and is then blameworthy, but it may also grow out of a sincere and earnest desire to know the truth. It is not true that good men are never disturbed with doubt: they are, and often painfully so. No thinking mind escapes this shadow. The higher up one climbs in thought and even in saintly character, the more may doubt beat against him, as mountain-tops are caught in storms that never sweep down upon the plains. It is not surprising, then, that John the Baptist had his doubts about Jesus at this time, and we need not think it strange if at times we are troubled in the same way.

2. What, now, did John do with his doubt? He did not brood over it until it hatched out the serpents of unbelief and bitterness and hatred of all things good. He did not allow his doubt to destroy what faith he had in Jesus, and he did not break away from him and slip down into careless and hopeless indifference. The man that deals with his doubt in this way is doing an unfair and guilty thing, and is driving his doubt straight into damnation. The fact that a man has doubt is not very

important: the important matter is, How is he treating it? He may so deal with it that it will lead him up into larger truth and richer life, or so that it may drag him down into guilty despair and ruin. What did John do with his doubt? He sent to Jesus inquiring "Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?" He did not consult with his disciples, who were bringing him various discouraging reports; much less did he take counsel with the Pharisees, the enemies of Jesus, or with the Sadducees, the agnostics of the day; but he sent directly to Jesus himself and asked him for further light and gave him a further trial. That is the first course to pursue with our doubt: go to Christ himself that we may get a better understanding of him and be filled with his Spirit, especially that we may be more willing to do his will, and then we shall know of his doctrine that it is of God. Doubt is a dreadful thing when it drives us away from Christ: it is then driving us towards our doom; but it is a good path when it moves us towards Christ: it is then leading us towards light and life.

3. How did Jesus deal with John's doubt? He said unto the messengers, "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard." This is a remarkable answer. It contains no harsh judgment upon John, or slightest trace of impatience with him for his doubt. Christ never dealt unkindly with any one for doubting him, and he will not be hard on us for our doubts, if we only bring them to him. Go and tell John the facts, said Jesus. He did not send word to John that his doubts were damnable and that he should stop thinking and get rid of his doubts by stifling them to death. This has been a favorite way of dealing with doubt in some quarters. The Roman Catholic Church has been very much afraid of thinking on the part of the people and has tried to discourage it; and some Protestants have

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not been free from the same fear. This spirit bids us beware of these troublesome questions, distrust our reasoning powers, close our books and stop thinking. But this is not the spirit of the Bible which urges us to prove all things, and it is not the call of God whose invitation is, Come now and let us reason together. Jesus did not stop John's thinking, and mental death is not the right cure for doubt. Neither did Jesus try to do John's thinking for him. John's question was, "Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?" Why did not Jesus answer with a plain and positive yes? Why not relieve John of all responsibility and perplexity in settling this question by settling it for him? Because this is not Christ's way, and it is not God's way. It is a way that presents plausible pleas and attractions. It seems so plain and easy and conclusive, and it has often been tried. The Pope wants to do all our religious thinking for us and kindly offers to relieve us of all trouble in the matter, and many a Protestant theologian is willing to undertake for us the same business. Why not have the church fix and finish our creed down to the last letter, and then simply accept it on its dogmatic authority? Because our minds will not let us and God does not want us to do this. Christianity is not superstition, but a rational religion. God has not given us reasoning faculties and then stifled and stultified them by leaving them no room in which to work; on the contrary, he is ever urging us on into larger use of our reason. God never settles our beliefs for us dogmatically, but he gives us reasons for them and bids us prove them for ourselves. So on this occasion Jesus said in effect to these disciples, "Go and tell John the facts and let him draw his own conclusion; I will not answer this question for him categorically, but I will suggest to him a line of thought and let him work it out for himself." He did not tell John to do less thinking, but he told him to do

more thinking. Jesus was not afraid of reasoning in his disciples: he only wanted them to reason enough and reason their way through to right conclusions. And so the way out of our doubt is not to think less until we relapse into mental stagnation and death, but it is to think more until we work our way forward into clearer light and larger truth.

4. What were the facts that Jesus submitted to John? "The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good tidings preached to them." These are miracles of healing. All the miracles of Jesus are works of mercy and have on them the marks of moral greatness; they fit into his mission and character and are as natural coming from him as are leaves and blossoms budding out of a tree, or as gleams of splendor shooting from the sun. These works are historical and necessary, but they are external and distant. There are other works that come closer to us and touch our personal experience. The character and deeds of Christ match and prove his claims. That white Life that grew up out of that hard, selfish world must have had a divine root that was never soiled with the sin of earth. His magnificent march through history, the empires of old wrongs he has lifted off their hinges, the moral revolutions he has wrought, the kingdom of brotherhood and love he is establishing, the hearts he is comforting, the souls he is saving, these are mighty works that bear witness that he is the Messiah of God. These sayings of his are self-certifying truths. They are not arbitrary, dogmatic doctrines or abstract speculations, but spiritual laws that work in our lives, just as Newton's law works in the skies. When all these works are added together and viewed in their consistency and cumulative power, they are conclusive proof that Jesus is the Son of God and Saviour of the

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world. The cure for our doubt is to get closer to these facts, especially to get into fuller sympathy with Jesus and become filled with his Spirit; and as we grow willing to do his will we shall know him that he is of God. Thus Jesus boldly trusted this matter to John's own judgment; and so will he trust us.

5. "And blessed is he, whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in me." With these words Jesus closed his answer to John. They imply that we must exercise some patience with Christ, that we cannot fully understand him, that after we have done our profoundest and most sympathetic thinking towards him there will still be unexplained remainders that we cannot clear up, that he is bordered with mystery that must ever transcend and try our faith. All our religious thinking must ever be margined and mingled with mystery. It would be a superficial religion that we could fathom; it would be a poor and pitiful God that we could see through. Some things relating to Christ we must take by faith; some of his ways may ever sorely perplex us. But blessed is he that is not offended on this account, but rather trusts and worships him the more.

## XXI

### THE PHARISEE AND THE FALLEN WOMAN

And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he entered into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And behold, a woman which was in the city, a sinner; and when she knew that he was sitting at meat in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster cruise of ointment, and standing behind at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have perceived who and what manner of woman this is which toucheth him, that she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. A certain lender had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. When they had not *wherewith* to pay, he forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him most? Simon answered and said, He, I suppose, to whom he forgave the most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And turning to the woman, he said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath wetted my feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. Thou gavest me no kiss: but she, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but she hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that even forgiveth sins? And he said unto the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.—*Luke 7:36-50.*

**T**HIS scene is full of human nature and divine grace. Two types of sinners stand sharply revealed in its intense light, and the power of Jesus to save is illustrated.

1. Simon, the Pharisee, is the first figure in the scene.

Being a Pharisee, he had the ideas and instincts of his class. Traditional and formal in his religion, cold, critical and exclusive in spirit, he prided himself on his righteousness and maintained towards others a lofty air of separation and superiority. "Sinner," the last word that he would ever have thought of applying to himself, was a contemptuous epithet that he applied freely to others. Jesus frequently came into collision with this class. He was a disappointment and an offense to them. His unworldliness and spirituality, his purity and meekness, his kingdom of brotherhood and love, thwarted all their ambitions and exasperated them beyond measure. They soon viewed him with distrust and suspicion, then their hostility grew into deadly hatred, and at last they fell upon him in murderous fury and crucified him on the cross. Jesus, on the other hand, dared to face them and let loose upon them the most terrible lightnings of judgment that ever issued from his lips. Simon belonged to this class, and yet he invited Jesus to dine at his house. This indicates a fairer state of mind towards the young Galilean Rabbi than the prevailing Pharisaic attitude, a disposition to cultivate some acquaintance with him and see what manner of man he was; he was even open to the conviction that he might be a prophet. Yet, while opening his house to him, his hospitality was not unstinted and hearty, but was lacking in the gracious courtesies and even in some of the common civilities of the occasion. The Pharisee did not greet his guest with a kiss and anoint him with oil and furnish him with water for the cleansing and cooling of his feet—marks of respect that would have been paid to an honored visitor. Simon accorded Jesus rather shabby treatment—a fact that Jesus did not fail to notice, and it drew from him at a fitting moment a quiet rebuke that the Pharisee must have keenly felt. Such is the first figure in this scene: an or-

thodox formalist of eminent respectability, cool, critical and calculating, willing to show Jesus some attention, but withholding from him the full measure of honor and careful to keep somewhat aloof from him.

2. The second figure in the scene was that pitiable character, a fallen woman. Innocence, temptation, and fall had been her life history. Doubtless fair had been the bloom of her youth, subtle and seductive had been the wiles of her betrayer, and now bitter and despairing were the depths of her degradation. She was now a social outcast, and life had no more joy and hope for her. But one day an event happened that changed the whole course of her unhappy life: she heard Jesus. His gracious personality and winning words must have produced a profound impression upon her. Possibly she heard him tell the scribes and Pharisees that publicans and harlots would go into the kingdom of God before them. His invitations and promises were the first words of hope and help that had fallen upon her ears since she had been cast out from society. The germs of goodness were not yet dead in her heart, purity was still a beautiful vision which she longed to attain, and she resolved that she would see Jesus and express her devotion to him. The feast of Simon gave her an opportunity. Oriental custom permitted uninvited persons to enter such a place, separated from the public court only by hanging curtains, and converse with the guests. The fallen woman passed in unnoticed and stood behind Jesus, who like the others reclined at the table on a couch with his feet extended behind. The woman had an alabaster jar of ointment, a costly and fragrant unguent that was very soothing and agreeable when applied to the body. It was her intention to anoint Jesus with this precious ointment, an act which was an extravagant honor. When, however, she found herself in his presence she was overcome with feeling and

burst into tears. Her sense of sin and shame and the thought of his purity and pardoning grace opened the fountain of her heart and flowed forth in a flood of penitence and faith. Her tears fell like rain upon the feet of Jesus. With her loosened hair she wiped off the stains, kissed his feet, and anointed them with her fragrant ointment. All this seems foreign to our sense of propriety and delicacy, but it was in accordance with oriental custom and expression of respect. These are the two contrasted figures in this scene: at the one extreme a Pharisee, self-righteous in himself and critical towards Christ; and at the other a prostitute pouring out her penitence in tears and showing her devotion to Jesus.

3. How was this act of the woman regarded and received? The Pharisee looked at it from his point of view. He thought within himself that, if this man Jesus were a prophet, he would have perceived that the woman that touched him was a sinner. How the Pharisee recoiled from the thought of that polluting touch! Not to touch others or be touched by them, to keep himself separate and aloof from others, this was the Pharisee's ruling principle and passion. We are ever in danger of cherishing the same exclusive and selfish spirit. There is a way in which we are to keep ourselves separate from sinners: we are to have no fellowship or sympathy with them in their sin. But we are not to withdraw from them and look down upon them in a spirit of self-righteous superiority. The hard, cold stare that "sinners" sometimes receive from the "righteous" repels and embitters them. Fallen women are especially subject to this unchristian and cruel treatment. We are all fallen sinners, and instead of recoiling from the touch of others and trampling them down, we should clasp hands and help one another up. Jesus showed Simon a more excellent way. "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee,"

was the gentle introduction with which Jesus opened his rebuke. The Pharisee was ready to hear it, and said, "Master, say on." The parable of the two debtors illustrated the principle that Jesus had to present. One debtor owed a lender five hundred pence and another owed him fifty, and he forgave them both. "Which of them therefore will love him most," was the question which Jesus submitted to Simon. The Pharisee answered carelessly, as though it were a matter in which he had no personal interest, "He, I suppose, to whom he forgave the most." Jesus then applied the principle to the matter in hand. He pointed out how he had entered Simon's house and been received with scant courtesy, as no water had been offered him for his feet and his head had not been anointed with oil: but in contrast with this cool reception the woman had washed and kissed his feet and anointed them with ointment. He therefore declared her sins forgiven, and drew the conclusion that she loved much; and then added with evident reference to Simon, "but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." The principle is that one's sense of the depth of his sin and of the fullness and blessing of his pardon will determine the warmth and power of his love. Simon had little sense of sin, and therefore he did not appreciate Christ; the woman had a deep sense of sin and felt that she was forgiven much, and therefore she loved Jesus much. The Pharisee thus compares unfavorably with the fallen woman. He looked down on her with supercilious contempt, but she stood higher in the estimation of Jesus. He thought that Jesus ought not to let such a woman touch him, but Jesus valued that fallen woman's penitent touch more than the Pharisee's feast. How often does the insight of Jesus reverse our judgments and standards of value? The man that stands high in the church and prides himself on his respectability and right-

eousness may fall to a lower level in the sight of Christ than some poor penitent from whose presence and touch society recoils. It is still written that the first shall be last and the last shall be first; and it is still true of some church people that publicans and harlots shall go into the kingdom of God before them.

4. We hear nothing more of Simon, and the woman now becomes the central figure in the scene. The Pharisee has been silenced and drops into oblivion, and Jesus now turns to the penitent. He did not lecture her on the enormity of her sin, but simply said unto her, "Thy sins are forgiven." Instantly the guests began to say within themselves, "Who is this that even forgiveth sins?" That was a question that on other occasions troubled the Jews, especially the Pharisees. They believed that God only could forgive sin, and in this they were right. But they were wrong in their application of their principle, for they did not know, as they should have known, that Jesus was the Son of God with power on earth to forgive sin. Jesus, unmindful of their critical thought, said again unto the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Here is salvation in its simplicity and saving power. A fallen woman comes up out of the depths of her sin and stands penitent in the presence of Jesus; no words pass between them, only a few simple acts show her penitence and her devotion to him; proud Pharisees are there to censure any recognition of such a person: but Jesus pronounces her sins forgiven and sends her away in peace. The soul that came to him so vile went away washed clean. The dealing of Jesus with fallen women is one of the wonders of his ministry. No other class of sinners are so cut off from human sympathy and help, are so hard to reach, and are considered so hopeless. Jesus dealt with them with the utmost frankness and freeness, and yet never drew upon himself the

shadow of suspicion. All his relations with them were marked with the utmost delicacy and refinement, wisdom and tact, sympathy and love. He attracted them to himself by his grace, melted them into penitence, and sent them away purified and peaceful. As he saved these lost ones, so can he save all sinners. All that go to him in penitence and faith shall be transformed by him into purity and peace. The blackest coal and the whitest diamond differ only in the arrangement of their atoms, and the one can be crystallized into the other. The vilest sinner may be transformed into the purest and most beautiful saint, and the spirit of Christ in the soul is the power that will work the wonderful and blessed change.

## XXII

### THE MISSION OF THE TWELVE

And Jesus went about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest. And he called unto him his twelve disciples, and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of disease and all manner of sickness. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these : The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother ; James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother ; Philip, and Bartholomew ; Thomas, and Matthew the publican ; James the *son* of Alpheus, and Thaddeus ; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him. These twelve Jesus sent forth, and charged them, saying, Go not into *any* way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans : but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils : freely ye received, freely give. Get you no gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses ; no wallet for *your* journey, neither two coats, nor shoes, nor staff : for the laborer is worthy of his food. And into whatsoever city or village ye shall enter, search out who in it is worthy ; and there abide till ye go forth. And as ye enter into the house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it : but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whosever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, as ye go forth out of that house or that city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city. Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves : be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.—*Matthew 9:35-10:1-16.*

**T**HE work of Christ was now growing and spreading, and it was necessary to use wider measures in accomplishing it.

i. A tour through Galilee revealed the needs of the

field. When Jesus saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them. It was not their political or industrial condition that excited his pity—they were at peace under the shadow of Rome and business may have been good—but he penetrated to their spiritual condition and saw that they were distressed and scattered as sheep without a shepherd. They were a great mixed mass of people of all classes and conditions, but Jesus viewed them all with compassion. He did not look upon them with cool and critical indifference, or upbraid them for their condition, but his heart was touched with the feeling of their infirmities and their sufferings became his sufferings.

“The harvest truly is plenteous,” he exclaimed, “but the laborers are few.” Is it not so still? Even in Christian lands the number of active workers in the cause of Christ is few compared with the work that is waiting to be done; and when we look out over the wide field of the world and see what a boundless harvest it is, in many places ripe for the reaper, how pitifully few are they that are gathering it! Jesus, however, did not let all his compassionate feeling escape in this exclamation: he turned it into the channel of action and made it achieve something substantial. It is easy to feel a fine frenzy of emotion over the condition of the multitude, but if this simply wastes away in tears or evaporates into the air, it has in it no virtue. Compassion that does not become conduct does others no good and does us harm. The first action of Jesus was a call for prayer unto the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers. Prayer should be the first step in every enterprise. It sends us to the source of all wisdom and power and puts us on the track of efficient means and successful attainment. Having invoked prayer for laborers, Jesus immediately furnished them himself. He did not simply pray for laborers and then let others find them, but he found them himself, and thus

answered his own call to prayer. His own disciples were not to be saved from this service, but they were saved for this service. Yet they were not sent into this work until they were fitted for it. Jesus gave unto them authority over unclean spirits and to heal all manner of disease, and this power was their diploma and the seal of their ordination. It takes trained laborers in the harvest field, and anybody in any raw stage of mental and spiritual development is not fitted to preach the gospel. The condition of the multitude is pitiful and may well excite our compassion, but only those that have been taught of Jesus Christ and been endued with power from on high can rightly minister to them.

2. The disciples were sent forth. They were with Jesus not that they might stay with him, but that they might receive his gospel and carry it unto others. Their spiritual training was not yet complete, they were still in the theological seminary, but they were given some preaching to do. The apprentice must be allowed to try his hand at the work, or he will never learn how. We are not to wait until we are complete in Christian wisdom and experience before we begin to work for Christ, but we are to begin with such preparation as we have and let wisdom and work grow together. Their field of work was strictly defined: not the Gentiles, or Samaritans, but only the house of Israel. This may seem strange as being at variance with the world-wide mission of the gospel, and yet it is divine wisdom and common sense. The propagation of any principle must begin at home and work outward. There must be a base of operation. The place to begin to impart the gospel is not far off, but close by with the next man. Home missions logically precede foreign missions. Further, the Jews were better prepared for receiving the gospel than the Gentiles. They had been trained up for this privilege and ought to have given

it a ready and fruitful reception. The richest and most easily worked soil is cultivated first. The disciples were to be gone on this mission only a few days or weeks, and they could accomplish more in so short a time in the garden of the Jews than in the unbroken wilderness of the Gentiles. Thus the gospel was given to the Jews first, not as an act of favoritism to them, nor in order to keep it from others, but because they were the best point from which to start it on its world-wide mission. The Gentiles were the larger field and may have looked more inviting and inspiring to the disciples, but the smaller field was the best for them. Christ knows all conditions and adaptations, and when he chooses a field for us, however small and hard it may seem, it is the best place in all the world for us to serve him.

3. The field having been assigned them, the next point was to give them a message. "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," was the proclamation they were to make. Christ comes to introduce a kingdom of order and peace and liberty into the confusion and strife and bondage of the world. The Jews were waiting for a kingdom with passionate longing, and this message would catch their eager attention. But their idea of the kingdom was of the earth, earthy, and it was proclaimed as the kingdom of heaven. It is not based on worldly power and splendor, but its throne is in heaven and its power is spiritual. It is built up, not over men, but in men. This kingdom was at hand to the Jews: the King had come and was manifesting his royal rule; and after his approaching crucifixion and resurrection the kingdom would come in Pentecostal power. This kingdom has come to us. It is not far off, but is nigh us and may be in our hearts. The greatest blessings of life are not far off in some distant Klondike, or far up in some inaccessible height of learning or distinction, but they are close by, and all we have

to do is to receive them and make them ours. Their message was to be illustrated with works of healing. They were to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out devils. They were to have in them some of the omnipotence of Christ and do the same things that he did. The gospel in their hands was not to be a mere theory, but a practical power. Their mission was to be a march of mercy whose monuments would be healed men and saved souls. It is still our commission as ministers and teachers to go everywhere preaching the kingdom and touching the world with healing hands. The gospel must not be kept up in the pulpit, but it must be got down into daily life where it will heal the sick, cleanse lepers and cast out devils.

4. The next point naturally was their compensation. What salary were they to receive? This is one of the first questions with the minister of to-day, and these disciples with their Jewish instincts were not insensible to this point. "Freely ye received," said Jesus, "freely give." Receive no money for God's grace; charge no fee for healing the sick; turn not the work of saving the lost into an unholy traffic for gain. This admonition was specially needful for these disciples that were made of ordinary human nature and had among their number a Judas Iscariot. The temptation would be strong in them, having been taken out of poverty and clothed with such authority, to use their position and power for personal profit. This temptation has always been a great danger and out of it have grown some of the most fearful corruptions of the Church. But Jesus Christ did not come into the world and die to make money either for himself or for his disciples, and at the beginning he laid the axe at the root of this tree of evil by ordaining that the gospel should be given freely, "without money and without price." Few things are so ruinous to the

ministry as an instinct for money and a love of personal comfort. Any suspicion of self-interest puts a blight on all Christian service. Yet because the disciples were to charge nothing for the grace of the gospel they were not therefore to receive nothing for their support in preaching it. For Jesus said: "Get you no gold nor silver, nor brass in your purses; no wallet for your journey, neither two coats, nor shoes, nor staff: for the laborer is worthy of his food." They were to throw themselves on the hospitality of the people and be taken care of while they preached. Ministers dare not charge for the grace of God; but they ought to and must receive support while administering it. And when a congregation does not support its pastor as it can and should, that pastor ought to leave that congregation and shake off the dust of his feet against it. The gospel itself is free; but the preaching of the gospel costs. Water as it falls in rain, gushes up in springs, and flows in streams, is free; but it costs something to have it brought in pipes into our homes. Having received the grace of the gospel freely ourselves, we should impart it freely to those around us and out to the ends of the earth.

5. The manner of their entertainment was the next point treated. On entering a city or town they were to find some worthy pious person and abide with him. There ought to be no painful discrepancy between a minister's pulpit and his boarding house. Ministers and all Christians should be careful of their associations, especially in strange places. If the disciples found a house worthy, they were to pronounce their peace or blessing upon it and were themselves to be a blessing to it. Every Christian tarrying in a home should radiate a Christlike spirit. Some visitors make their presence an annoyance and leave behind them a remembrance as of a disagreeable odor ; other guests are as a fine fragrance in

the home and leave behind them delightful memories and blessed benedictions. If a house were discovered not to be worthy, they were quietly to retire from it and their peace and blessing would be withdrawn. If any house or city would not receive them or hear their message, they were to depart and shake off the dust of their feet as a sign against it. People were free to reject the Gospel, if they chose, but they rejected it at their peril. It would be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city. This was not an arbitrary judgment threatened them, but it would be the natural and necessary outworking of their unbelief and wickedness. All this was fulfilled forty years later. Horrors worse than the destruction of Sodom fell upon Jerusalem and the Jews when the Romans came and blotted them off the map of the world. We shall be judged according to our light, and if we, living in the noonday of the gospel, repent and believe not, it shall go hard with us and in the day of judgment men of an heathen nation shall rise up and condemn us.

6. A word of caution was now given them. They were going forth as sheep amongst wolves: their path would not always be safe and smooth; temptations would beset them, enemies would surround them and watch their chance. The Christian ministry is still plagued with wolves: wolves of opposition and discouragement and very often with the wolves that Paul was greatly pestered with, "unreasonable and evil men" (2 Thess. 3:2). All Christian service is beset with opposition and enmity. Christ never lured disciples into his service by fair prospects and false promises, but told them the truth. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." Amidst these dangers the disciples were admonished to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. They must not be aggressive and defiant, as though they

were challenging opposition and thus create unnecessary offense. Enmity should attack them unprovoked. They should present a winning spirit and not thrust out sharp points of antagonism. Innocence that disarms prejudice should mark their ways. Yet they should be wise, exercising prudence and tact and utilizing all opportunities and emergencies to the best advantage. It is a fine art to be able to present truth in such a way as to win men and not excite their opposition. Some men bristle all over with antagonism like the spines of a porcupine, so that we can hardly go near them without getting stung. The Christian has no right to turn men against the truth by offensive ways and personal unloveliness. We need more of the blessed Spirit of the Master in us that by the attraction of his grace we may win souls.

## XXIII

### THE TRAGEDY OF THE BLACK TOWER

And king Herod heard *thereof*; for his name had become known: and he said, John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and therefore do these powers work in him. But others said, It is Elijah. And others said, *It is* a prophet, *even* as one of the prophets. But Herod, when he heard *thereof*, said, John, whom I beheaded, he is risen. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. For John said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. And Herodias set herself against him, and desired to kill him; and she could not; for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous man and a holy, and kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was much perplexed; and he heard him gladly. And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, and the high captains, and the chief men of Galilee; and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and them that sat at meat with him; and the king said unto the damsels, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. And she went out, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou forthwith give me in a charger the head of John the Baptist. And the king was exceeding sorry; but for the sake of his oaths, and of them that sat at meat, he would not reject her. And straightway the king sent forth a soldier of his guard, and commanded to bring his head: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsels; and the damsels gave it to her mother. And when his disciples heard *thereof*, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.—*Mark 6: 14-29.*

“The days will grow to weeks, the weeks to months,  
The months will add themselves and make the years,  
The years will roll into the centuries,  
And mine will ever be a name of scorn.”

—QUEEN GUINEVERE.

AS Jesus moved from point to point in Galilee, working miracles and preaching the kingdom, the fame of his mighty works reached Herod and had a startling effect on that guilty ruler. Various theories were being offered to account for the new prophet, but Herod had a theory of his own which he could not keep from blurting out. “This is John the Baptist,” he said; “he is risen from the dead.” Sadducee and sceptic though he was, yet conscience overpowered his scepticism in the resurrection and he saw the murdered man alive. The sight of the holy prophet’s blood dripping on the palace floor never could be banished from his mind and it made him believe in a possibility which his creed denied. The occurrence of this incident leads the writer of the gospel to give an account of the imprisonment and death of John the Baptist. The tragedy occurred in Castle Macherus, or the Black Tower, situated on a crag overlooking a deep mountain gorge nine miles east of the Dead Sea. Mineral springs were near by, and in the palace he had built there, Herod spent a portion of each year. In the ruins of the Castle that still remain are two deep dungeons in one of which probably John was imprisoned. The prophet had been in prison about a year when, amidst the revelries of a royal feast, there was enacted this dark and revolting tragedy.

1. The crime had its roots in causes far back. Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great and ruler of Galilee and Perea, had inherited and developed many of the traits of that monster of iniquity. He was unscrupulous, superstitious, sensual, cruel and callous. He loved luxury and

ease and allowed nothing to stand in the way of his personal will and passion. At the opposite extreme stood John the Baptist, ascetic in his habits, inflexible in his righteousness, lofty in his purposes, and fearless in spirit. There was not room in the same country for two such men to move around in without their coming into collision. This collision presently took place. There was a woman in the case. Herod's elder brother Philip had married his niece Herodias, an ambitious, unprincipled and fascinating woman. She had married Philip, the oldest son of Herod the Great, in the hope that he would succeed to the throne, but he was disinherited and sunk to the level of a poor man in a private station. The disappointed and scheming Herodias now had no further use for Philip, and, turning her eyes to Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, laid her plot to catch him. He already had a wife and she had a husband, but these were slight obstructions in the way of such people, and the unholy union was formed. Fawning courtiers flattered the guilty pair, but when John the Baptist got a chance at Herod he did not mince his words. "It is not lawful for thee to have her," he said. He shot a flash of lightning into Herod's guilt; he put his finger on the burning point of his sin and made him writhe under its touch. There are times when the preacher must come right to the point and hit sin hard. From this hour the prophet's doom was sealed. The fury of an enraged woman that had the heart of a tigress was let loose against him. She would have killed him outright, but was restrained by Herod. He was afraid to go so far, but sent and seized John and hurried him off to the Black Tower and thrust him into its dungeon dug deep in the rock. Herod would not stand such preaching and he made way with the preacher. John was not the last preacher that has lost his place through faithfulness to duty. We all need

to be on our guard that we do not thrust away from us influences that are rebuking our sins and seeking our good.

2. The reason that Herod would not let Herodias have immediate revenge was that he feared the people because they counted John a prophet. He knew that John was a righteous man and he was afraid to do him harm; and he stood in wholesome fear of public opinion. Herod was not all bad, but there were still good points and tender spots in him. He had some appreciation of John's lofty character; he was amenable to reasoning and the play of moral motives. His susceptibility to these influences put restraints upon him and held him back from deeper depths of wickedness. The worst man has good elements, and there is hope for him as long as he has any sensitive moral nerve that can be made to tingle with spiritual emotion. The value of righteous character and of sound public opinion is illustrated in John's influence over Herod. The prophet's unspotted purity, above the suspicion of the most evil-minded enemy, imbuing the public mind with its power, was a sermon mightier than his most terrific denunciations and wrought a spell over men whom no other influence could move or restrain. The righteous are the salt of the earth. Their simple presence silently exerts a restraining influence that stops the feet of wicked men and saves society from destruction. The most powerful sermons we can preach are the living sermons that we are when we are epistles known and read of all men.

3. The scene is now set in the Castle Macherus and we look in upon revelry and dancing. Herod's birthday was being celebrated with a great social function. It was the society event of the season, and the lords of the court, the officers of the army, and the wealth and fashion and beauty of Galilee, were present. The Castle gleamed

with lights and strains of minstrelsy floated out upon the air. But there was one unhappy woman there that night. In the midst of the revelry Herodias was rankling with revenge and her brain was busy with plots and plans. At such a feast it was customary to introduce a professional dancing girl to entertain the guests. This dance was immoral in character and pleased the spectators in proportion as it passed the borders of modesty. On this occasion Herodias introduced Salome, her own daughter by her former husband, as the dancer. It was a shame for the mother to prostitute her daughter to this purpose, but this was a cunning link in her plot. The scheme worked to perfection and Herod was caught. He was infatuated with the girl and, under the spell of her fascination and inflamed with wine, offered her whatsoever she might wish; he was at her service and bound himself with an oath that he would not stop short of half his kingdom. This extravagant and foolish offer shows the work of wine and the power of excitement and infatuation to break down the borders of sober judgment. We are not at all times equally sane, self-possessed and self-controlled, but under the spell of temptation our estimate of values is deranged, our sense of proportion is distorted, and we rush into action so foolish and guilty that we afterwards wonder at our own folly. Keep your judgments true by keeping your brain clear and your heart pure. Herod promised half his kingdom for the sight of an immoral dance, and we may give the whole kingdom of the soul in foolish and wicked exchange for sinful gratification.

4. The daughter now withdrew to consult her mother. The tigress was lying in wait in her lair outside the dance hall and her hour was come. Beneath the marble floor, under her feet, chained to the rock, was John the Baptist, the hated preacher that had dared to cross her path. All

that scene of splendor and revelry could give her no satisfaction while this object of her fury was alive. Wine could not appease her thirst; she wanted blood. "What shall I ask?" was the daughter's question. The answer was ready on the very tip of the mother's tongue. Without the waste of a word she said, "The head of John the Baptist." Into those few words were compressed all the malice and revenge and ferocity of her savage nature. The daughter was compounded of the same ruthless elements as her mother and hurried back to the presence of the king with the fatal request. The daughter acted on right general principles in consulting her mother, and yet the wisdom of such a course depends upon the wisdom of the mother. Advice, it has been said, is the worst kind of vice, and in this instance this was terribly true. "What shall I ask?" is a question that is always passing from children to parents. Are we telling our children, not perhaps by direct advice but by the more powerful indirect suggestion and subtle spirit of our lives, to ask in life for wealth, marriage to a fortune, fashion and pleasure? Are we instilling into them a worldly spirit, or a Christlike mind? On the answer we give them to this question their destiny trembles.

5. The king on hearing the request was exceeding sorry. He saw that he had been outwitted and inveigled into consenting to a crime which he had steadily refused to commit; he feared John and feared the consequences of such an act; and doubtless even his coarse nature was shocked by such a request. Yet he did not have strength of character to resist. Two plausible pleas led him on: his oath and consistency in the presence of his guests. Neither of these could justify him in committing a crime. We must do right, though we have promised to do wrong; and we must be consistent, not with what we have been, but with what we should be. But the weak-

willed king was now afloat on the swift-rushing current of sin. Instantly a soldier was dispatched down into the dungeon to execute the order. Suddenly the door creaked on its hinges, and the officer stood in the gloom, peering around for the prisoner, all unexpectant of his fate. One strong, sure stroke of his keen sword and the deed was done. The head was placed in a charger and brought dripping up into the palace before the horrified guests and handed to the daughter, and from the daughter to the mother. Her revenge seemed to be complete: the prophet's voice was silenced. But was his rebuke of her sin nullified? Was that the end of that tragedy in the Black Tower? No, it was only the beginning. Afterwards Herod thought the murdered man was alive and was terrified. Not all the multitudinous seas could wash the stain of the prophet's blood out of the consciences of the guilty pair. There were spots on them that would not out. Just across the border was King Aretas, the angry father of Herod's first and unlawfully divorced wife. He made war on Herod and defeated him with great loss. Presently the scheming Herodias got Herod into trouble at Rome and he was banished into France and then into Spain, where they both died in exile. They went down to their dishonored graves stung with disgrace and fear, and have been pilloried before all the ages for their crime. Once more it was terribly confirmed that the wages of sin is death. Thus John the Baptist went to his cross before his Master. "And when his disciples heard thereof, they came and took up his corpse and laid it in a tomb."

## XXIV

### FIVE THOUSAND FED

And he came forth and saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things. And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, The place is desert, and the day is now far spent: send them away, that they may go into the country and villages round about, and buy themselves somewhat to eat. But he answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat? And he saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes. And he commanded them that all should sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds and by fifties. And he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake the loaves; and he gave to the disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. And they did all eat, and were filled. And they took up broken pieces, twelve basketfuls, and also of the fishes. And they that ate the loaves were five thousand men.—*Mark 6: 34-44.*

AFTER the execution of John the Baptist, Jesus with his disciples crossed Lake Galilee to the northeastern shore for safety and rest. No sooner had he started than the people followed after him in boats and around the shore so that presently a great multitude was gathered before him. That was the end of his rest, and the work of teaching and healing began.

1. Evening drew on and a difficulty loomed up. What was to be done with all these people? Jesus intimated that they must be fed. The perplexed disciples took stock of their provisions and put their heads together and were at their wits' end. Already the sun was dropping behind the western hills and the chill of evening

was in the air. Something must be done quickly ; what could it be ? They thought of the multitudes ; they thought of their few loaves and fishes ; they thought of everything except Christ. It does not seem to have occurred to them that he could help them out of the difficulty. Sometimes in our perplexities we think of everything—but God. At last they hit upon a way out of the trouble and came to Jesus with the plan. “Send them away, that they may go into the country and villages round about and buy themselves somewhat to eat.” Send them away ! How natural the suggestion, how easy the solution, what a quick riddance of the burden. We must not, however, be too hard on the disciples, as we would probably have thought of the same thing and their plan seems to be only common sense. But nothing can make bigger blunders than common sense when it forgets God. This thought may get into our theology and church life. A church that makes itself exclusive and welcomes people of a certain class and gives the cold shoulder to others, a silk-robed, kid-gloved Christianity that separates itself from the common crowd, is saying in tones that are not misunderstood, Send them away. The anti-missionary spirit that says, We have heathen enough at home, is saying of the heathen abroad, Send them away. When in any way we have made sure of our own basket of provisions and are not willing to share with others, but look with indifference on the great lost world, we are bidding the multitudes take themselves off and buy bread for themselves. “Send them away,” said the disciples ; “They need not depart” (Matthew 14:15), instantly answered Jesus. Any plan that would send people away from Christ is no part of the gospel. Here is the contrast between disciple and Master : the one short of means, narrow and selfish and wanting to send people away ; and the other full of

resources, broad and sympathetic and having abundance and welcome for all.

2. "Send them away," said the disciples; "Give ye them to eat," said Jesus. So he rolled the great work upon the disciples. They virtually came to him for help in a work, and he said to them, Do it yourselves. Poor help this seems, and yet it is just the kind God is always giving us. He never takes a work entirely off our hands and does it for us, but immediately gives us a part in it, and then the work will not move until we do our part. When asked what they had, the disciples said, Five loaves and two fishes: "but what are they among so many?" (John 6:9). Evidently they did not think much of these pitifully few loaves and fishes and thought they were hardly worth mentioning. This is what Moses thought of his power of speech when God commanded him to go and speak unto Pharaoh. This is what we often think of our abilities and means when we are given a work to do. We have only a few little loaves and cannot feed any one; we are slow of speech and cannot speak or pray; we are lacking in money, or education, or opportunities; we cannot do anything, for we have no means; if we were gifted and rich as others, we might do something, but as it is we have no chance! This is our blind reasoning and miserable excuse in the presence of hungry people waiting to be fed. What did Jesus say of these loaves? "Bring them hither to me" (Matthew 14:18). The Master was not alarmed at the scantiness of the means. What the disciples despised, he took and with them wrought astonishing results. With the five loaves that they thought hardly worth mentioning he fed five thousand men. It is not the means, but the power behind the means, that does the work. Give Samson only the jawbone of an ass and with it he will slay a thousand Philistines. Give David only a smooth stone out of

a brook and with it he will kill huge blustering Goliath who had defied the whole army of Israel. Give the chemist only scum and dross and out of it he will extract the most beautiful colors. Give the poet the rudest pen and with it he will write musical lines and fairy dreams. The teacher says, I would teach better if I had a better class; the minister says, I would preach better if I had a better pulpit; we are all thinking, We would do better if we had more money, or a higher position; and in all these thoughts we are mistaken. What we need is not more means, but more power in using the means we have; not a higher position, but more wisdom and skill and faithfulness in the position we are in; not more loaves, but the power to use and multiply the loaves we have. There are undreamed-of possibilities in us, if we would only develop them. With the means we have, we can feed five, or five hundred, or five thousand people. But to do this we must bring our loaves to Christ and work under his direction and blessing.

3. How was this done in the miracle? First, Jesus had the multitude sit down on the green grass in ranks by hundreds and fifties. What was the need of this? That the people might be got at, that the work might be systematized. The disciples did not go around and distribute the bread indiscriminately, but each one had his own rank or company and served that only. The principle is that of order and organization. We must cut up our work and apportion it out so that each one will have a definite part. Find your work and stick to it; pick out your man and save him. The principle of cutting up the multitude into companies is in some degree fulfilled in our different churches and denominations. If we would receive some of this bread, we must sit down in one of these companies. If there were any stragglers that hung around the borders of the company and refused to sit

down in the ranks, it is not likely that they received any bread; and there is no promise of the bread of life to any refusing to join with those that sit down by hundreds and fifties before Christ.

4. Next, Jesus took the bread and blessed it. It was no longer common bread now; no eye could detect any change in it and yet it was changed. Jesus had pledged to that bread all his mercy and love; he had put behind it his omnipotence. When we get the divine blessing upon our work, the very constellations are marching behind us. Ask God to bless your bread; it will then be better bread, and in some way through divine providence it will go farther. Jesus, having blessed and broken the loaves, did not keep the bread but gave it to the disciples. Jesus did not keep anything for himself, but gave all his heavenly glory and earthly comfort for the lost multitude of this world. And the disciples did not keep the bread, but they gave it to the multitude. We are to receive of this bread ourselves, but it would be utter selfishness for us to keep it to ourselves. It is given to us so abundantly that we may give it to others. Partake of this bread freely, but do not forget to pass it on. See that the hungry man next to you gets some of it. By word and gift and service distribute this blessing that there may be less hunger and more satisfied souls in the world. Note the exact point in the narrative at which the miracle comes in. Where is it that the loaves begin to multiply? "Bring them hither to me" (Matthew), Jesus said: it is not there. "And he took the five loaves and the two fishes:" it is not there; there are still only five loaves and two fishes. "And looking up to heaven he blessed, and brake the loaves:" we might expect it there; but it is not; after he blessed them there were still only five loaves. Where is it then? "And he gave them to the disciples to set before them;" *there* it is! When they

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began to give the loaves, the loaves began to multiply: not before. Perhaps the disciples as they began to give the bread thought that it might soon give out and hesitated to begin. But it did not fail; they kept on giving and yet their hands never grew empty, but there was always enough for the next rank. When shall we learn this blessed divine law that it is not by keeping our good things that we get the most good out of them and that they multiply in our hands, but that it is by giving them. Especially is this true of spiritual blessings. The more knowledge one gives to others, the more and better knowledge he has himself. The more kindness one bestows upon others, the kindlier grows his own heart. Our own wounds are healed by healing others' wounds. In spiritual things, division multiplies; the more we give, the more we have. The reason we have so little Christianity in us is that we are imparting so little Christianity to others. It is literal fact that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

5. "And they did all eat and were filled." When the multitude saw these few loaves broken and started out, perhaps those around the distant edges of the crowd thought, Well those down there by the basket will get some of that bread, but it will never reach us: yet it did. Nearer and nearer came the multiplying loaves until the outermost rank was reached, and the last man was satisfied. Even then the bread was not all gone, but twelve baskets full of fragments were gathered up. Let us not fear that the mercy of God will ever run short. Though we seem to be far out on the edge of the multitude, the bread will come to us. It is near us now and all we have to do is to take it and eat. This we must do for ourselves. Jesus can make the bread and send it to us, but he cannot eat it for us; we must do this through faith and obedience. Our hearts are hungry; we feel our need of

something more satisfying and lasting than anything this world affords. We need bread: not husks that swine do eat; not bread of the field for the body only or mainly, but bread for the soul; the bread of forgiveness and purity and peace. To whom shall we go for this bread? Only to the Lord Jesus; he only has words of eternal life. This is the bread which cometh down out of heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever.

6. "Gather up the broken pieces which remain over," said Jesus, "that nothing be lost" (John 6:12). And they gathered up twelve baskets of the broken pieces that remained. Was not this strange frugality on the part of him that could create such abundance? But unbounded resources and the largest liberality may be closely connected with the strictest economy. The Hand that could create a whole loaf did not disdain to pick up a crumb. God with all his infinitude of resources never wastes anything, or lets any fragment fall useless and forgotten out of his hand. Wealth is no excuse for waste. Many a great fortune has grown out of gathering up fragments. The sewerage of Paris has been turned into a golden stream yielding two millions of dollars a year. The by-products in some manufacturing establishments are a source of large profit. Wasting fragments has ruined many a business. Everything that has in it the possibility of good ought to be saved. Fragments of time improved have made great scholars. Fragments of opportunity seized have saved souls. We are ever dreaming that we would accomplish great things if we had time and means, while we may be letting slip through our fingers moments and means that might be turned to great use. There are fragments lying around us that would fill many baskets and feed many souls. Waste no bread, but gather it up and keep it for the hour of need.

## XXV

### THE BREAD OF LIFE

And when they found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw signs, but because ye ate of the loaves, and were filled. Work not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him the Father, even God, hath sealed. They said therefore unto him, What must we do, that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. They said therefore unto him, What then doest thou for a sign, that we may see, and believe thee? what workest thou? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, He gave them bread out of heaven to eat. Jesus therefore said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, It was not Moses that gave you the bread out of heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven, and giveth life unto the world. They said therefore unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.—*John 6: 25-35.*

AFTER the miracle of feeding the five thousand Jesus and his disciples crossed back over the lake, passing through a violent storm on the way. The next day the people whom he had fed on the eastern side of the lake followed him and found him in Capernaum, where this discourse on the bread of life was delivered.

1. Having found him in Capernaum the people wanted to know of him how he had got there. They had seen the disciples pull away in their boat without him and they wondered how he had eluded them. Jesus paid no

attention to their question, but immediately opened up a much deeper matter. How he had got there was of no consequence, but why they had followed him was of vital importance. There are some things about Christ which we do not need to know and with which we need not perplex ourselves. Curious questions concerning him will never make us his personal disciples. Jesus with unerring insight laid open their hearts and told them why they had sought him : they wanted more bread; they had followed him, not with hungry hearts, but with hungry stomachs; they had seen no deeper meaning in the miracle than a good meal and had no higher thoughts of Christ than that he would feed them again. This motive for following Christ is still working. There are always people hanging around the church in the hope of charity, and men that push forward into front pews and conspicuous positions whose eyes are on loaves and fishes. Yet Jesus did not rebuke these followers for their low motive: however low it was, it could be made the stepping-stone to something higher. Let charity draw people towards the church, if it will; it is a good thing for suffering hungry ones to feel that the church has some help for them. When their lower needs are ministered to they may begin to feel their higher needs and the bread of earth may prepare the way for the bread of heaven.

2. Jesus now led the thoughts of these followers up to higher needs and imperishable bread. "Work not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which abideth unto eternal life." This is plainly not intended to forbid our laboring for our daily bread, a duty which is enjoined upon us in the Scriptures and is one of the primal necessities of life. But these people were thinking of nothing else than earthly bread, and this command forbids such absorbing pursuit as rises no higher than the bodily life and shuts out everything else. Bodily hunger is one of

man's lowest appetites and he has many higher ones: his mind hungers for truth and his heart for love; his conscience hungers for forgiveness and purity and peace, his soul hungers for immortality and God. In satisfying our complex appetites, attention should be paid to their relative rank and importance. If the body should be fed, much more should the mind and heart. Conscience has higher claims upon us than condiments. When the higher spiritual needs of the soul are neglected and starved, life dies at the top and sinks down into the flesh. The man that stuffs his body and starves his soul has a pitifully perverted sense of proportion and value; he is clutching at the chaff and missing the wheat, grasping the jewel-case and losing the jewel itself. The religious nature is a natural and necessary part of our humanity and, if it does not get its rights, it will have its revenge. If this spiritual hunger is not fed, the consequences will be more disastrous than the failure to eat bread. Seek ye first the kingdom of God. As God has created bread for our physical hunger, so has he furnished bread for our spiritual hunger. Would he make the whole earth a harvest-field and orchard for the body and then forget the soul? The great answer to this question is Christ. The Son of man has come to give us this bread. He is in every way authorized and qualified to satisfy our spiritual needs, for him hath God the Father sealed..

3. The command to work for the meat which abideth unto eternal life called forth the question, What must we do, that we may work the works of God? The spiritual teaching of Jesus was gaining entrance into the minds of his hearers and they were beginning to feel the stirring of spiritual hunger. At least curiosity was at work and they wanted to know more about this bread of life. Their question was a good starting point and indicated a hopeful state of mind. It

showed interest. They were already aroused out of their gross absorption in the life of the flesh and dead passivity to the life of the spirit. They felt that something must be done and were willing to do it. The most hopeless state of men is that in which they have no sense of their spiritual needs and care for none of these things. Some of the deadliest diseases are not felt; pain is the sign of the struggle for life. When sinners feel the burning point of conviction and are crying out, Men and brethren, what must we do? the Spirit has got hold of them and Pentecost is near. Jesus answered, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." They were probably thinking of some outer work, such as the performance of some religious ceremony, but Jesus located the work of God, that is, the work that would please God and bring his blessing, within the heart and make it consist in faith on his Son. God begins with the heart and measures all outer acts by the inner motive. Without faith it is impossible to please him, because the whole life is wrong from its root out through every branch and leaf. But when the heart is filled with faith and love, every deed is touched with divine beauty and glorifies God. No "work" of ours can merit the bread of life, but faith puts the heart in a receptive state so that God can fill us with his fullness. The greatest work we can do in the sight of God is to believe on his Son, for this is a root out of which grow all things that are beautiful and blessed.

4. The people now demanded a sign of Jesus. They referred to the manna in the desert as proof from heaven confirming the authority of Moses: "What workest thou?" The Jews were greedy for "signs"; they wanted some wonder that would strike the senses, and yet when they had it their faith was not much helped by it. The manna did not prevent unbelief in the desert, and

these very people had seen such a sign only the day before. The demand for signs up to a certain point is reasonable and right and Christianity is not afraid of the demand. It is ready to show its credentials and asks for no blind belief. But miracles do not have the moral value and convincing power that we might suppose, and their presence would still be attended with disbelief. Christianity has its miracles, but it also has deeper evidence and better signs than these. This deeper evidence is intimated in the answer Jesus gave to this demand. He called their attention away from Moses to God as the Giver of bread and then uttered the pregnant saying, "The bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven, and giveth life unto the world." "Giveth life unto the world"—this is the sign and test and infallible evidence of Christianity. How do we test bread, or any article of food? By its nourishing power: if it gives life, its evidence is complete. How do we judge any machine, book, or movement in society? By the same test: if it gives life, its case is made out. By this sign the gospel is proved to be bread: bread for the human soul, bread for all the complex faculties of man, for it matches all his needs and gives him life. On this inner ground of experience the Christian stands as on a rock which cannot be shaken.

5. "They said therefore unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread." They had reached a point of spiritual awakening where they distinctly desired the bread of life. No doubt their thoughts were vague and mixed with material images, but they were in a state in which Jesus could reveal himself unto them. Then he said unto them, "I am the bread of life." The bread of earth had at last brought them to the bread of heaven. There are few figures of speech in the Scriptures into which the gospel is so compactly condensed. The analogy between Christ

and bread is close and rich in significance. As bread matches and satisfies our physical hunger, so Christ matches and satisfies our spiritual hunger. He imparts his life to the soul, forgives its sin, cleanses away its impurity, and fills it with strength and peace. Bread is the universal food. Some kinds of food are restricted to certain climates, or nations, or tribes. But bread is subject to scarcely any of these limitations. It is adapted to every continent and climate and is used down under the tropics and up as close to the pole as men can creep. It is used by the well and by the sick, by rich and poor, by high and low. Bread is one of the most democratic things in the world and knows no class distinctions. It will nourish an ignorant man just as well as a scholar, and a black man as well as a white man. It simply says, Give me a hungry man and I will give him life. So Christ is adapted to the spiritual needs of all men and knows no distinctions of race or rank. He simply says, Give me a penitent soul and I will give it eternal life. Bread is abundant. Some kinds of food are rare and costly. The whole world cannot feed on pineapples or peaches. Luxuries are the privilege of the few, but bread is plentiful for all. It grows under every sky, and the soil is full of unnumbered harvests. Christ has abundance for the world. His forgiveness is not a limited luxury, but a universal grace. He does not save himself up for certain kinds of people, but bestows himself freely upon all. Bread is a simple thing in its practical use. There are deep problems connected with it: the chemist wonders at it and the biologist stands before it dumb. But there is this beautiful thing about it: we do not need to understand it in order to use it and be nourished by it. The farmer can raise it, the housewife can bake it, and the little child can eat it, though they know nothing of these deep problems. The Gospel has its profound

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mysteries that no philosopher can fathom; yet in its essential principles and practice it is as simple as bread. Faith in Christ and obedience to him are acts of heart and life that all can do from the greatest even unto the least, and it is by these acts and not by the deep things of theology that we are saved. It is not by analyzing our bread and finding out what it is made of, much less is it by disputing over it, that we live by it, but by eating it; so it is not by analyzing the Gospel or disputing over it that we are saved by it, but simply by believing on Jesus and doing his will. He that cometh to him shall never hunger, and he that believeth on him shall never thirst.

## XXVI

### THE CROSS LOOMS INTO VIEW

From that time began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord : this shall never be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan : thou art a stumbling-block unto me : for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it ; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what shall a man be profited if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life ? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life ? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels ; and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds. Verily I say unto you, There be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.—*Matthew 16 : 21-28.*

Is there diadem, as Monarch,  
That his brow adorns ?  
“ Yea, a crown, in very surety ;  
But of thorns.”

**J**ESUS was now being overworked in Galilee with the crowds running after him, and he went over into Syria for a short summer vacation of retirement and rest—the only instance in his ministry when he stepped outside of Palestine into a pagan country. The opposition of the Pharisees was also growing intense and he was breathing a stifling atmosphere; and he escaped for a season into a heathen country where he could find freedom unvexed by Jewish bigotry and malice. On his

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return to Galilee he found this hostility unabated. The end was now drawing near, and failure was written across his public ministry: it was time to make sure of his disciples in order that an imperishable seed might be left after he was gone. With the twelve Jesus now went north into the retired region of Cæsarea Philippi, where he spent a period of privacy with them in binding them closer to himself and leading them into the mystery of the cross. He questioned them as to their personal views of himself, and Peter, acting as spokesman, declared that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God. This great confession placed Christ's kingdom on a rock and he was now ready for his hour. He had failed with the many, but he could count on his chosen few.

1. From that time Jesus began to shew unto his disciples the coming trial. He spared them this painful disclosure until they were able to bear it. God often hides things from us in mercy and reveals them to us only as we are ready for them and can stand the strain. The faith that Jesus was the Son of God prepared these disciples for their great trial, and when we have this faith we are ready for God to tell us anything. Jesus announced that he must go to Jerusalem, and there was surely nothing terrible in this, for this journey was a joy to every Jew; but sin reverses all right relations, and for Jesus the unbelieving Jews turned this journey into a tragedy. He must go to Jerusalem, not that he might have a joyous share in the glory and worship of the holy city, but that he might suffer: a strange place for the Son of God to suffer. The city that had been exalted to heaven in order that it might receive the Messiah with sympathy and welcome was about to receive him with suffering and woe. Where only roses ought to bloom, sin has often planted thorns. The sharpest thorn in this crown of suffering was that he was to suffer many things

of the elders and chief priests and scribes. It was not the rabble and mob of the city that were to fall upon him in fury, but the preachers and doctors of divinity. The men that are most conspicuous in position and professed piety may be the greatest obstructions in the way of Christ's kingdom, and we all need to take heed that our light is not darkness. It was no ordinary suffering that Jesus was to undergo, but he was to be killed. The cross spread its bloody arms across his path and he was journeying straight towards it. He knew what was coming as he went unto Jerusalem, but the terrible vision never stayed his steps. Many a path of duty still has a cross at its end. But beyond the darkness of the cross Jesus saw the shining of a great light, even that the third day he should be raised up. The star of final victory drew him on. We can pass through any night when we know that at last its darkness shall blossom into light.

2. Impetuous Peter could not stand this disclosure and broke out in the exclamation, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." This was just like Peter, acting impulsively under a sudden pressure of mixed motives, good and bad. He did not see the star of the resurrection shining clear in the darkness of the cross, but the night blotted out this star and it was all dark to him. It seemed too terrible to be true and he would not tolerate it. His motive was good in so far as he spoke out of a sense of devotion to his Master: he could not see him suffer. But was there not also a selfish root to this exclamation? Was not his hope of a kingdom in which he himself was to be a foundation rock cut short by this announcement of suffering and death? Peter did not want Jesus to suffer because he would have to suffer with him. And at the best his rebuke was impertinent presumption in assuming that he knew better than Christ and in daring to criticise him.

When our hearts breed strange questionings and rebellious feelings against disappointment and suffering, we may well examine ourselves to see whether we are presuming to know better than God and are rebuking him. Peter's presumption drew from Christ a crushing reply. "He turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." Jesus instantly recognized in this suggestion of Peter the same temptation with which he had been assailed in the wilderness: the proposal that he should escape the cross and climb up into the kingdom some other way. Looking through Peter, Jesus saw Satan. Satan stands behind every bad man as his shadow; and he stands behind every good man that is making a bad suggestion. Jesus was here being tempted by one of his friends and by that disciple on whom he had just conferred special honor and power. Temptations are all the harder to discern and resist when they approach us, not through enemies, but through friends. Jesus instantly did the only right and safe thing to do with a temptation: he put it behind him. He did not let it stand before him where he could see its allurement and come under its fascination and power, but he thrust it behind him where he could see and feel its subtle presence no more. Peter minded not the things of God, but the things of men; he proposed to win the world by worldly means; he was after popularity and power and was not particular as to how he obtained them; and so he tried to turn Jesus from the cross into a short cut to the kingdom. But Jesus saw that victory lay, not that way, but in the way of the cross.

3. Having set his own feet firmly in this path, Jesus called upon his disciples to follow him. "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up

his cross, and follow me." He had a right to call men after him into the path of self-sacrifice, for he was himself walking in it and was near to its crown of thorns. "He goeth before" and never asks us to go where he has not gone. The disciple cannot be above his Lord, and where the Master has gone, we must go. Following Jesus is doing as he did and becoming as he was and is. There are deep points of difference between his cross and ours, but there are also strong points of likeness. "If any man would come after me"—there is no compulsion about it. Here is the point of human responsibility and sovereignty, and every man may do as he will, and must then forever bear the consequences of his choice and course. "Let him deny himself:" we must leave self behind when we follow Jesus. All sinful cravings and all innocent desires that conflict with duty must be suppressed. The Christian conflict begins with one's self, and self is a hard enemy to conquer. "And take up his cross." The cross with us has become a figure of speech and a jewelled ornament, but with Jesus it was a hangman's rope and worse, a shameful and terrible death. A true cross still has in it this element—some trial or loss or suffering or sacrifice that costs effort or agony or blood. Every follower of Jesus has his own cross, one that grows out of his own situation and service and is peculiar to himself, and his call is to take up that cross and bear it patiently and bravely to the victorious end. We still shrink from this course as Peter did and hunt around for some shorter and easier way; we would fain follow our worldly instincts and cravings rather than this high calling, but every such suggestion is a temptation of Satan that, if followed, will cost us life and soul, and the way of losing life is the way of finding it: the cross is ultimate victory.

4. As an aid to the practice of cross-bearing, or dying

to live, Jesus laid down a profound principle with its homiletical application. "For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life?" Jesus saw that Peter's proposal was just the devil's offer to give him the whole world if he would fall down and worship him; and he further saw that if in this way he did gain the world he would thereby lose his soul. Instantly he thrust the temptation behind him, and then he strengthened himself and his disciples and all others in this decision by asking the tremendous question, What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? He cast up the account, putting on one side the gain of the world and on the other the loss of the soul, and found the account did not balance; the loss was too great for the gain; the transaction did not pay and he refused the exchange. The same exchange is offered to us and the same business principle should guide us to the same conclusion. It is true we are not offered the whole world. Satan is never so extravagant in his terms with us: he does not need to be; a much smaller offer is now made, only an infinitesimal fraction of the world, only so much of it as is contained in fortune and fame and fashion and pleasure; but to many souls this offer looks like a great bargain. Yet it is always a losing exchange. When the gain of the world costs physical life the whole gain is loss, for it cannot be enjoyed. Men have rushed back into a burning house or sinking ship to secure some treasure of money or jewels and lost their lives in the attempt. They gained some little fraction of the world, but afterwards that gold might have been found lying melted beside their calcined bones, or clutched by fleshless hands on the bottom of the sea. What profit was there in that gain? So men

wear themselves out under the strain and excitement of business only to find themselves physical and mental wrecks. After gaining the world they have lost their health and are of all men most miserable. But there is a still deeper way of losing the soul. If one has a diamond and uses it in such a way as to discolor it or crack it or grind it to powder, he keeps its substance, but loses its value. So we may lose the soul by impairing its value, destroying its finer powers and leaving it degraded and ruined. The soul is a very delicate organism, subject to deterioration and fatal damage. One loses some part of his soul when he gains any part of the world unjustly; he loses his sense of truth and justice; some atom of righteousness is blotted out of him; he has lost his highest and best self. Every lie is so much lost soul. Pleasure that costs purity is a little gain purchased with a great loss. Worldliness injures the soul. The love and pursuit, as a chief end and passion, of the things of this world lowers the tone of moral and spiritual life. Such a spirit does not beget strength and spirituality of soul, but breeds weakness and degeneracy. Loving the world is losing the soul. Whenever, then, we use the world or let the world use us in such a way that it stains our morality, injures our spirituality, damages our personality, we make the bad bargain of gaining some little portion of the world, probably too small to mention, and losing some infinite worth out of the soul.

5. Jesus closes his homiletical reflections by taking a deep hold upon the future and grasping the far-off interest of faithfulness. He looked beyond the cross to that day when the Son of man will come in the glory of his Father and reward every man according to his deeds. That hour of ultimate victory was inspiration for him to keep him true to duty even unto death. We should take long views and lay great bases for eternity. Worldly

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gain has its little hour of satisfaction, but only a life that is built on the rock of Christ's righteousness shall last through the ages and stand unshaken when the Son of man comes in his kingdom.

## XXVII

### THE TRANSFIGURATION

And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became white and dazzling. And behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elijah; who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: but when they were fully awake they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. And it came to pass, as they were parting from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah: not knowing what he said. And while he said these things, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my Son, my chosen: hear ye him. And when the voice came, Jesus was found alone. And they held their peace, and told no man in those days any of the things which they had seen.—*Luke 9:28-36.*

“ O Master, it is good to be  
Entranced, enrapt, alone with thee;  
Till we, too, change from grace to grace,  
Gazing on that transfigured face.”

**I**T is not without significance that, in all of the three gospels in which it is recorded, the transfiguration is connected with the announcement that had recently been made of the coming crucifixion. This unexpected and startling revelation must have shrouded the disciples in deep gloom: it seemed the utter disappointment and destruction of all their hopes. They needed a glimpse of the divinity that was hidden in Jesus and of the glory that lay beyond the cross to disperse the dark-

ness and sustain and inspire them. Possibly also Jesus himself, as he drew near to his passion, needed a fresh assurance of the Father's presence and love. The transfiguration met this need for both disciple and Master. It was a revelation of power that the cross could not crush; it shot its splendor through the gloom and kindled despondent faith and hope into new strength and joy.

1. The transfiguration is a mountain scene and ranks with Sinai and Calvary among the loftiest summits in the range of sacred story. Jesus with Peter and James and John, his most intimate and trusted disciples, climbed the mountain slope to a place of prayer. It was night. Jesus engaged in prayer. Presently the disciples were conscious that a mysterious change was being wrought in the dim and dusky figure of the Master. His face began to shine and his clothing to emit gleams and sparkles of light. The strange luminosity grew into effulgence until his countenance was radiant and his raiment dazzling white. His whole person seemed to be steeped in splendor, a glory from within was streaming through the veil of his flesh. There is a mystery here whose border we may not cross. There were divine possibilities in Jesus of which this transfiguration gives us a glimpse. It would seem that his divinity was hidden by the veil of his humanity and that for a moment its glory was kindled and burst through. In a weaker degree, Moses was transfigured when, after his forty days of communion with God on Sinai, his face shone; and they that looked on Stephen at his trial "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." Thus even the human spirit, when intensely kindled, shines through the flesh and in a degree transfigures it. Of Daniel Webster it is recorded that, for several hours after he had delivered his great oration at Bunker Hill, his face wore an indescribably grand expression that awed those who came into his

piesence. Character carves the countenance. Sydney Smith said of Francis Horner that the Ten Commandments were written on his face. "Human physiognomy," says Victor Hugo, "is formed by the conscience and by the life, and is the result of a multitude of mysterious excavations." Some have become so sanctified by the Holy Spirit that they wear a heavenly aspect and are verily transfigured into the likeness of Christ. It was as he prayed that Jesus was transfigured, and it was after forty days of communion with Jehovah that the face of Moses shone. Prayer kindles the soul into intense consciousness of God, and it is then that the glory of holiness shines through the veil.

2. Two visitors from the heavenly world now appeared upon the scene. Moses and Elijah, themselves shining with glory, talked with Jesus. Few facts in the gospel are so deeply and richly significant. Moses, representing the Law, and Elijah, representing the prophets, are here associated with Jesus, the Messiah whom they had foretold and prepared the way for, thus binding the old and the new Dispensations together into unity. Redemption is the same through all ages and forms one plan. Immortality is here brought to light. These are travellers returned from the other world. Many centuries before, they had quitted the habitation of earth, yet here they were alive. Death does not end all. They had the same bodies as on earth, only they were transfigured with glory, prophetic of the resurrection body. They were recognized as Moses and Elijah, thus illustrating the fact of heavenly recognition. We shall know each other there. They were in possession of the same human faculties that they had in this life. Death and heaven do not change the constitution and individuality of the soul. The redeemed spirit is purified and glorified, but it is the same personality. They talked with Jesus, showing that

the redeemed are still interested in the affairs of earth. And what was the subject of their conversation? "His decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." Redemption is still the subject of greatest interest in heaven, the very angels desire to look into it, and its point of intensest glory is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If the heavenly inhabitants are so interested in this redeeming sacrifice, God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. As the heavenly visitors were departing impulsive Peter spoke up in a bewildered state of mind, saying, "Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." It was good for the disciples to be there. This revelation of the hidden power and glory in Jesus must have scattered their doubts and wonderfully revived and strengthened their faith. In its splendor the Cross was robbed of its shadows and terror. It threw the gate of heaven ajar and gave them a glimpse of the glory within. Such a Master they could trust and worship. It is good for us that the disciples were eye-witnesses of this event. Their record has inimitable marks of truthfulness, and the transfiguration is proof of the divinity of Jesus and of immortality. As we stand in imagination upon this mountain, faith grows clear and strong, Jesus shines upon us as the Son of God, our blessed dead come near, and heaven lies round about us. In so far as the Spirit of God burns in us and streams through us, we are transfigured, and this is good for us, even the most blessed experience of life. Yet, blessed as was this experience, Peter was mistaken in his desire to protract it. Jesus had other work to do than to enjoy his glory, and the heavenly visitors could not tarry long on earth. The Mount of Transfiguration is not a place to dwell: too much work is waiting for us on the plain below. It is

good for us to climb the mount of meditation and prayer and see God face to face and be transfigured before him, but we must not stay there too long. Religious rapture must not become a luxury that causes us to forget the great world lying in sin and want. Prayerful meditation on the mount must be combined with active mercy on the plain to form the full-orbed Christian life.

4. A cloud now overshadowed them and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my chosen: hear ye him." The cloud was a symbol of God's presence, but one that hid him from view; the voice was the voice of God, setting his seal upon Jesus as his Son and directing faith, obedience and love to him. The cloud shut the mystery and glory of the Father's face out of sight, but the voice brought him near and declared his will. The cloud concealed and the voice revealed. This is the method of God in all his ways. He always hides much from us, and yet lets us know enough to do his will. It is the glory of God to conceal a thing. The ultimate nature of the world, of life, of the simplest and most familiar thing, is enveloped in a cloud. We cannot go far in our search into these things until we are lost in a maze of mystery. And God, the Infinite and Eternal, who inhabiteth immensity and jewels his garment with burning suns, who by searching can find out him? "Lo, these are but the outskirts of his ways: and how small a whisper do we hear of him!" So God walks through the world trailing clouds of glory. Yet this cloud does not envelop in doubt our duty. There is an infinite stretch of mystery which we cannot see, but there is always an edge next to us which we can see that lets us know what we are to do: there is a cloud, but out of the cloud comes a voice. Nature hides much from us, but she takes care to let us know enough to do her will. Great as is the mystery of God, yet we can know enough

about him to live in harmony with him. No one need be lost because he is involved in a cloud of mystery: God will let him know the truth that can save him. Out of the very heart of the mystery that conceals God comes the voice, This is my beloved Son: hear him. Jesus is the revelation of God: he that hath seen him hath seen the Father. He has authority to speak in the name of God: hear him. Hear him as he speaks of sin and forgiveness: "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Hear him as he speaks of the way of life: "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Hear him as he speaks of trouble: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." Hear him as he speaks of death: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Hear him as he speaks of the beyond: "In my Father's house are many mansions: I go to prepare a place for you." Hear him, and mystery will fade from your path and your feet will find the way of life. Thus the disciples were strengthened and guided and the Master himself was made strong to bear his cross.

5. The voice died away in the silence, the cloud melted into the invisible, and Jesus was found alone. The transfiguration glory had faded from his person and he was his ordinary self. Moses and Elijah had fulfilled their mission to earth and had vanished into the unseen world whence they had come. The affrighted disciples were bidden to arise. Life resumed its accustomed course. Intense ecstatic experiences cannot long continue. Nerves would snap and the brain break down. We cannot always live on the mountain-top. Most of our days must be spent down on the common plains of life, and the world is waiting for us there. Peter thought to retain Moses and Elijah, but they were not needed and

were permitted to depart. Jesus only is enough for us. The prophets leave us, but Jesus is with us alway, even unto the end of the world. The disciples held their peace and told no man. They did not boast of their experience, or blab it out. Some things we must not tell. What we have seen in the secret place of the Most High is not to be made a matter of public display and foolish speech. Moses, when he came down from the mount, did not know that his face shone: but the people knew it. If we have been with God, we need not tell others: they will find it out. Climb the mount of prayer and communion until you are transfigured before God: then come down into the world and say nothing about it, but get to work and heal some troubled soul.

## XXVIII

### JESUS AND THE CHILDREN

In that hour came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And he called to him a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me: but whoso shall cause one of these little ones which believe on me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and *that* he should be sunk in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of occasions of stumbling! for it must needs be that the occasions come; but woe to that man through whom the occasion cometh! And if thy hand or thy foot causeth thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee: it is good for thee to enter into life maimed or halt, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into the eternal fire. And if thine eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is good for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into the hell of fire. See that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. How think ye? if any man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and go unto the mountains, and seek that which goeth astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth over it more than over the ninety and nine which have not gone astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.—*Matt. 18: 1-14.*

ON descending from the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus found that the disciples that had remained on the plain below had vainly attempted to heal a demoniac boy. After rebuking them for their unbelief and spiritual weakness, he cast the evil spirit out. In

company with the disciples, he then journeyed southward back to Galilee, and on the way gave them a more detailed account of the coming crucifixion and resurrection. On his return he paid the Roman tax with the miraculously-obtained coin. During the return journey (Mark 9: 33), there was a dispute among the disciples as to who should be greatest. Soon after their arrival in Capernaum, the disciples submitted this question to Jesus, and his reply is given in this passage.

1. "Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" was a question troubling the disciples and embroiling them in strife. Was there ever greater misconception of a master's teaching? The disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus disputing as to who should be greatest! How fatally had they misunderstood his spirit and the nature of his kingdom. They never had imbibed this spirit from him. This was not the only time they raised this question. On a later occasion James and John wanted the highest offices in the kingdom, and at the institution of the Lord's Supper under the very shadow of the Cross, this controversy broke out afresh. The idea of a worldly kingdom was rooted deep in these men, and the ambition for place and power was a passion in their hearts. This blinded them to the spiritual teaching of Jesus, fostered their selfishness and pride, and involved them in cunning schemes and mutual strife. "Who is greatest?" is a question that still troubles the church and the world. It grows out of a false root and its fruits are evil. The desire to do one's best and reach the highest attainment and influence as a means of good is a worthy ambition that lifts life up and blesses others. But the desire for place and power as a means of personal aggrandizement and triumph over others is a selfish ambition that blights the self-seeker and curses the world. Many of the strifes and divisions in the church, of the

corrupt practices in politics, and of the ways in the world, grow out of this selfish ambition to be the greatest. "Seekest thou great things? Seek them not."

2. Jesus answered the question of the disciples by means of an object lesson. Calling a little child to him, he set him in the midst of them and said, "Verily I say unto you, except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Thus a little child was made to rebuke and teach these quarrelling disciples. They were looking in the wrong direction for true greatness. To go up, one must first go down. Humility is the door of entrance into every kingdom. "The first and last step in the education of the scientific judgment," says Faraday, "is humility." There is something in a child that is the greatest and most precious thing in the world. Its innocence and beauty, its simplicity and humility and perfect trust, are not these the finest blossoms of life? Scientists have been coming to some wonderful conclusions. They tell us that a child is higher up on the scale of evolution than a man. Its relatively large brain and small face, its delicate bony system, its perfect instincts and quick intuitions, are the marks of a higher organization than that of man. Man as he grows in some degree degenerates. The child is a prophecy of a higher type of humanity. If we want to see what kind of men nature will make in the future, we must look at a child. "If we turn," says a scientific writer, "to what we are accustomed to regard as the highest human types, as represented in men of genius, we shall find a striking approximation to the child-type. The average man of genius is short and large-brained—the two chief characteristics of the child—and his general facial expression, as well as his temperament, recall the

child. The progress of our race has been a progress in youthfulness."<sup>1</sup> But who made this discovery long before these scientific men? Open the gospel and find the answer. "And Jesus called a little child unto him and set him in the midst of them." In leading us to a child as our teacher and example of greatness Jesus did not lead us backward and downward, but forward and upward. In getting more of the child spirit we are getting forward into the coming man; yea, we are attaining unto a perfect man, even unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

3. Jesus next unfolded the relation in which children stand to him and to us. "Whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me." Every child is Christ's child, the object of his care and love. In so far as the child has Christ's spirit of humility and trust it has his nature and is his image and representative. In serving and loving a child, then, we are honoring the Christ-like spirit, and in doing good to it we are doing good to him. Every parent knows that whoever honors his child honors him, and the same principle reaches up to Christ and God. This adds enormously to the dignity of serving children. Parents and teachers in training children are serving Christ, and whoever touches any child with a hand of blessing pleases God. The converse is equally true that whoever offends one of these little ones offends Christ and excites the indignation of God. One of the wickedest sins of which a human being can be guilty is to tempt children into evil. He that stains a child or youth with impurity, or teaches him to use profane or foul speech, or leads him to intoxicating drink, or in any way works his ruin, is a very devil and the wrath of God abideth on him. It were better that one should lose his life than do such work. Thus our relation to children is

<sup>1</sup> *Man and Woman*, by Havelock Ellis, p. 392.

one of the most responsible points of life and our treatment of them is attended with far-reaching consequences. He that touches a little child touches God.

4. This led Jesus to enlarge upon offenses in general, though still keeping his eye on children. The world is full of woe, because it stumbles so often into sin, and the natural and necessary wages of sin is death. No one can get through the world without meeting temptations and in this sense it must needs be that the temptations come. Yet this "needs be" in no degree excuses the tempter; and woe to that man through whom the temptation cometh. Human responsibility and evil necessity are here closely intertwined, but they are never confused, and amidst all the complicated interplay of good and evil in this world, each one's responsibility stands out distinct and clear, and every one of us shall give account of himself unto God. Jesus proceeds to describe the thorough surgery with which we should cut sin out of our lives. When gangrene attacks the hand, rather than that the poison should spread and involve the whole body in mortification, off comes the hand. The same principle of surgery extends to the moral life. When anything in our life becomes a source of temptation to us, and we cannot master it and it leads us into sin, then, however good and useful and beautiful it may be, it should be given up and cut off. Any pursuit or possession, companionship or amusement that is poisoning our life with sin, should be plucked out and cast away, though it be as dear to us as an eye. It may take as unflinching bravery to have the knife applied to one's sins and temptations as to lie down upon the surgeon's table. But the surgeon's knife is moved by wisdom and love, and it is divine love that bids us cut off our temptations, that our souls may not perish in eternal sin.

5. The great Teacher now returned to the children

and emphasized their preciousness in the sight of God. "See that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." We must not press this statement too far, and infer that every child has its own guardian angel. It is only affirmed that children and believers, as a class, have angels that are ministering spirits sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation (Heb. 1:4). In what unseen ways this ministry is performed we do not know. But if heaven is watchful over these little lives and there is a rustle of angel wings around every cradle, how watchful and earnest should we be in our care of children. Despise not a child, for it is precious with the infinite worth of an immortal soul, and in it are sleeping unknown possibilities. The worth of one soul and the earnestness with which God seeks it were now illustrated in the beautiful parable of the lost sheep. Ninety and nine sheep may be safe in the fold, but if one little lamb is lost out in the mountains the shepherd leaves the ninety and nine and goes forth to seek the lost one and comes back with it rejoicing. "Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." One child lost from the home calls forth all the energies and self-sacrifice of the home to find it; one soul lost from God calls forth all his wisdom and love to save it. Not one effort, however costly it may be, will he withhold that he may find his lost child. There is wonderful hope in this great saying of Jesus. It furnishes a strong ground of hope for the salvation of children dying in childhood. It assures us that God has done all for every sinner that he can do, and that he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come unto him and live.

Thus the question of the big, burly, quarrelling dis-

ciples was answered by a silent, wondering child. "It was a great day in the Church when that little child stood there and all-unconsciously represented the kingdom of heaven. Dear little child!—so little that the Saviour took him up into his arms: a hand all dimples, a cheek so fair, made for the kiss of love and trust and blessing, and eyes that had no speculation in them, still a gentle wonder of dreamy love, looking around itself wondering at the scene. And yet that child was made that day to set forth to all the ages the kingdom of heaven! Where, then, are the great, the wise, the rich? Where are the ingenious, the intellectual, the learned, the men of mighty brain and mind? There is folly in that question." In proportion as a man is truly learned, is he truly modest; in proportion as a man is really great, is he really child-like. It is the child spirit that we need in our hearts. This will solve many of our troubles and give us peace. Then will heaven lie around us through all our days as in our blessed infancy.

" Quiet, Lord, my foward heart,  
    Make me teachable and mild,  
Upright, simple, free from art,  
    Make me as a weaned child:  
From distrust and envy free,  
    Pleased with all that pleases thee."

## XXIX

### THE SEVENTY SENT FORTH

Now after these things the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself was about to come. And he said unto them, The harvest is plenteous, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest. Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no wallet, no shoes: and salute no man on the way. And into whatsoever house ye shall enter, first say, Peace *be* to this house. And if a son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon him: but if not, it shall turn to you again. And in that same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the laborer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house. And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you: and heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But into whatsoever city ye shall enter, and they receive you not, go out into the streets thereof and say, Even the dust from your city, that cleaveth to our feet, we do wipe off against you: howbeit know this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh. And the seventy returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us in thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall in any wise hurt you. Howbeit in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.—*Luke 10: 1-11, 17-20.*

**J**ESUS had finished his work in Galilee and was about to start southward on the east side of the Jordan on his final journey to Jerusalem.

1. In order to prepare the way before him, he sent forth seventy disciples into the cities and villages in which he was about to preach. On a previous occasion (Matt. 9: 35; 10: 8) he sent forth the twelve on a similar

mission, but now his work was widening, and he sent forth seventy. This broadening process has gone on until to-day there are many thousands of ministers and missionaries in all lands preparing the way for Jesus Christ. The disciples need to go before the Master to utter the call to repentance and to teach his truth so that men will be ready to understand and receive him. Every Christian has a commission to go forth and do this work. These disciples were sent in groups of two each. This would spread their labors over a wide region and enable them to reach many points at once: yet it did not scatter them as individuals and make their work lonely and discouraging, but bound each one to another, and thus gave them all the mutual benefits of companionship. Christian workers should always work together, and all believers should be one brotherhood. Division of labor and combination of laborers should be harmonized into one system of service that will yield the most fruitful results. These laborers were many compared with the little band that had been first sent out, but they were still pitifully few compared with the vast harvest that stretched out ripe and rich in every direction. Jesus was deeply touched with the sight of this harvest and called upon his disciples to pray for laborers to go out and gather it into his kingdom. This harvest field has broadened out until it is now bounded only by the rim of the planet. The sight of a field so great and so urgent in its need of laborers should arouse our interest and energy and lead us to go ourselves, or send others.

2. Some specific directions were given these disciples as to the methods of carrying on their work. They were to go forth as lambs in the midst of wolves. Their mission would take them among hostile and dangerous people, who when their hatred was aroused would have no more mercy upon them than wild animals. Among such

people they were to be as innocent as lambs and were not unnecessarily to offend them. How literally is this being fulfilled to-day? In China some of our missionaries have been tortured and murdered by people less merciful than infuriated beasts, yet have they been as innocent as lambs. Christian workers are all exposed to being misunderstood and persecuted, and they should study to give us as little offense as possible, and strive to be peaceable and patient. These disciples were to take no purse with them, nor any extra baggage, but were simply to depend upon ordinary hospitality. In the East travellers are received into any house and entertained for several days without thought of charge, and this would be ample provision for these disciples on a temporary mission. But it does not follow that means that would be sufficient for them in their circumstances would suffice for our missionaries in other circumstances. These directions were local rules and not universal principles. Such entertainment as these disciples received was not a purely gratuitous gift, but was really in the nature of pay for service rendered: "for the laborer is worthy of his hire." In entering a house they pronounced peace upon it, and their presence was a benediction. Some guests are a blessing, and their simple presence is rich pay for all they receive. Every Christian should be so gracious in manner and so wholesome in influence that he will be welcome in any home where he may tarry. These disciples were entitled to entertainment, but they were not to be too particular about it. "Eat such things as are set before you." Some guests—even some ministers—have sly ways of finding fault with their entertainment. They expect more than they have a right to receive, or they are offensive in their manners. Some are so fastidious and finical in their tastes and so imperious in their demands that their presence becomes a burden and vexation, and

the welcome of their coming is surpassed by the joy of their going. It is a fine art to know how to receive entertainment graciously, as well as to know how to give it, and this grace the Christian should cultivate.

3. The seventy had a work to do and a message to deliver in every city. "Heal the sick that are therein." Christ imparted to them some of his own power, and they were to illustrate and prove their mission by laying healing hands on the sick. The gospel proves its doctrines by its deeds, and commends itself to men by its kindly care of the sick and afflicted. Visiting the sick is an important part of pastoral work, and medical missions is one of the most efficient means of spreading the gospel among the heathen. The medical missionary has access to people that a preacher could not reach, and his healing work wins gratitude and confidence that are forerunners of faith in Jesus Christ. All the healing virtue in the world, whether of medicines or of human science and skill, belongs to Christ and emanates from him. It is his hand that is directing all these agencies for conquering disease and is thus redeeming the world from physical evil. The healing work of these disciples, however, was only an introduction to their message, "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." Healing the body was only surface work that went no deeper than the flesh: the kingdom penetrated to the spirit and healed through and through. The Christian Church would never educate and send forth and support medical missionaries in heathen lands simply to heal the bodies of men: this is only a means of gaining access to them and influence over them so as to set up the kingdom of God in their hearts. The kingdom of God is the great need of this world. Sin is anarchy that has spread disorder and distress through all its life. Christ comes to put down this anarchy and set up a kingdom of order and righteousness.

and peace. God is its eternal King, whose laws are liberty and life. This kingdom has come nigh us through the gospel. It is proclaimed and offered to us through the Word and Spirit, and is pressed upon us through all the means of grace. It is not an eternal kingdom of worldly power and pomp, but is internal and spiritual; it is nigh us, even in our hearts. When this kingdom is set up within us, all our discordant and warring faculties and functions are harmonized into purity and peace; and when the same kingdom is extended over the world all its strifes and wars will cease, and righteousness and love will reign.

4. If the disciples were rejected in any city with refusal to hear them and with persecution and violence, what action were they to take? They were to depart from that city and wipe the very dust of its streets clinging to their feet off as a testimony against it. This was not to be done in any spirit of anger and revenge, but as a solemn and sorrowful protest against its unbelief. Missionaries and ministers and all Christians are to do all they can to win the attention and confidence and secure the conversion of the unconverted. But there may come a point of refusal or of persecution when further efforts would be useless and harmful, and then the Christian may withdraw. We may do harm in pressing our Christian faith too persistently on others. Their sovereign right to decide their own faith and action is to be respected. We may grieve over their unbelief, but we must leave them alone. Sinners may become so hardened and violent in their sins that God himself withdraws his Holy Spirit from them, and they are left in eternal sin. Yet these disciples in departing from a city were to make one further appeal to its people in the hope of winning them. "Howbeit know this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh." Mercy and blessing

were near them, and nothing kept the kingdom out of their city and their souls but their own refusal. We all should know that God has done great things for us, and if we do not have his kingdom in our hearts, it is not because it is not nigh us, but because we will not have him reign over us.

5. The disciples went forth and did their work and returned. No account is given of their labors, but they state the results. "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us in thy name." Jesus had told them to heal the sick, and they had been able to do this, even to casting out evil spirits. Their power was equal to their program, their commission was matched by their results. Is it not so still? Jesus gave his disciples a great command, "Go ye and teach all nations," prefacing it with the claim, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," and backing it up with the promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." What has become of this program? It is being fulfilled, even as he said. His disciples are overrunning the world, everywhere teaching men the everlasting gospel. And are not the results such as call for divine power as their explanation? Sin is being pardoned and purified, ignorance is being dispelled, vices are being uprooted, all evil is being resisted, devils are being cast out, and divine Fatherhood and human brotherhood are being established in the hearts of men. The disciples of Jesus are far from having fulfilled his promise, but they are working along its line and can show results that prove its divine power. The report of the seventy parted the veil of the future and gave Jesus a glimpse of coming victory. "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven." The casting out of those demons by his disciples was prophecy and proof to him of the ultimate fall of Satan himself with all his evil works. A beginning had been made of a march of

conquest that should not stay its course until all things had been put under Christ's feet and he should reign Lord of all. This battle is still on, and it is our duty to keep on its firing line, fighting as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Lest the disciples might be unduly elated with their success, Jesus admonished them, "rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven." We need to beware of pride even in our spiritual victories, and to know that what we can do for God is infinitely overshadowed by what God has done for us.

### XXX

#### MARTHA AND MARY

Now as they went on their way, he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at the Lord's feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving; and she came up to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. But the Lord answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.—*Luke 10:38-42.*

**T**HIS is the first recorded visit of Jesus to that house, which, more than any other place during his ministry, seems to have been to him a home. Here he found hospitality and rest and friendship, towards this place his tired feet frequently turned, and out of it he went to his cross. He had no home of his own, and yet his hand is making all homes better. Two sisters were in this home, who were strongly contrasted in character and conduct, and their behavior on this occasion presents an interesting study.

1. Martha appears to have been the elder of the two sisters and the head of the family, and on this occasion she received Jesus into her house. The coming of this notable guest with his disciples into her home was no ordinary event, and she proposed to celebrate it with a feast. As we find her serving at another feast outside her home (*John 12:2*), we may infer that she was an expert in the culinary line and serving was her forte. She evidently thought that the most effective way of enter-

taining her guests was to feed them, and presently great preparations were being made to this end. The busy, bustling Martha was soon in a flutter and whirl of excitement, and the whole culinary department of the house was astir with activity. There was a clatter of dishes in the kitchen, a running and rushing about through the house, and a general air of haste and confusion. Presently Martha was "cumbered about much serving," drawn about in different directions, distracted, as the word means. She had set about preparing too large and elaborate a dinner, and the affair was getting beyond her power and patience. A multitude of details was bewildering her, and she knew not which way to turn. In the meantime Jesus was discoursing in that same house on things of the highest import in words of heavenly wisdom, and Martha, immersed in the affairs of the kitchen, was missing a golden opportunity. She is a type of an active and practical person, overloaded with work and worry, always busy to the point of distraction, but busy on the lower side of life, buried in the kitchen or in the office and seldom rising into the higher regions of thought, superabundant in labors, but deficient in meditation. Such people, it need not be said, are very useful and necessary in the world. They prepare our meals and keep the home running, they are energetic in business, they are active in the temporal affairs of the church, they drive things and make them go all along the line. At times they may seem to overdo things in their bustling activity and fussy ways, but we must give them great credit for their service, and while we are in the parlor-enjoying "the feast of reason and the flow of soul" we must not forget that they are out in the kitchen preparing for us a wholesome and appetizing meal.

2. In marked contrast with the action of Martha on

this occasion was the behavior of Mary. She "sat at her Lord's feet, and heard his word." Her more passive and meditative nature drew her to him and made her a rapt listener to his wonderful speech. She sat at his feet in lowly humility, and she heard his word as one eager to know the ways of the kingdom of God. Truth, in her view, must precede and guide conduct, the heart must muse in meditation before it can wisely pour itself out in action. She was not sitting there in lazy idleness to escape duty in the kitchen, or in a state of dreamy passivity, but her mind was active and masterful as she meditated upon the words of Jesus, and she was gathering a deeper and richer spirit for the fuller service of life. She was sitting at the feet of Jesus that she might rise up stronger and more serviceable than ever. Mary, then, is a type of a meditative person, one who draws apart at times from busy activities for reading, meditation and communion. Such persons may sit at the feet of great thinkers and teachers, who have written imperishable words in the world's literature, and from them they absorb great thoughts and fresh inspiration; or they draw apart with friends, and in confidential fellowship they enlarge and enrich one another's thoughts; or they sit at the feet of Jesus as he speaks out of the Word of God and they hold communion with him and with the Father through prayer, and their hearts burn as they muse on these holy things. Such meditation is the deepest and richest preparation for action. Thought must ever precede conduct, we must know before we can do. The tree must silently gather nourishment out of the soil and moisture out of the air and vital beams out of the sun and subtle radiations out of all the stars in the sky before it can bloom, and we must drink in vital influences through all the roots and leaves of our being before we can bear fruit. Meditation must make our hearts burn with noble

thought and holy aspiration, and then we can rise up and be masterful in the service of life.

3. At this point occurred an interruption that bordered close upon a quarrel between these two sisters. Martha had more on her hands than she could carry through, and, thinking herself deserted and abused by her sister, she grew impatient and irritable, and presently she gave way to her temper and created a painful scene. Stepping up to Jesus with a decided quick movement that strongly suggested her impatience she said, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me." This curt utterance, which tries to be respectful and yet every word of which quivers with suppressed anger, was a stinging rebuke to Mary that must have made her face flash scarlet with astonishment and shame; and it dared to let its lash fall even on Jesus himself. Mary may have been somewhat derelict in the matter of helping to prepare this dinner, and then again she may not have been open to this charge. She may have done her part in helping her sister up to a certain point, or she may have thought so elaborate a feast was unnecessary, or she may have been so drawn by the talk of Jesus that, pausing to listen for a moment, she was soon unwittingly absorbed in his words. However this may have been, Martha's indignant rebuke shows how people of different temperaments are likely to misunderstand and blame one another. The active Martha could not understand the meditative Mary. She thought her sister was neglecting duty and shirking her work in order that she might sit in dreamy idleness and ease; and, besides, there was little use in merely listening to talk anyway, especially while a great dinner was being prepared and all hands were needed in the kitchen. No doubt also Mary thought that Martha was too exacting and fussy about that dinner, and that it would have been

better for her to be in listening to those wonderful words of Jesus than to be out working and worrying to get up a great feast when a simple repast was all that was needed. There is always a tendency for active practical people and passive meditative people to fall out. The pushing hustler that always wants to take right hold of things and drive them through has small respect for the thinker who sits and reads and meditates; he thinks such a man is of no use in the world and does not earn his salt. The thinker also may underrate the practical worker as a shallow and sordid man, and so may fail to appreciate his real worth to the world. We should all know that it takes different kinds of people to make the world, different types and temperaments to blend their endless varieties into a richer and stronger unity, and this should make us broad and fair and kind in judging one another. Both the active worker and the meditative thinker are necessary in their places and should receive our full respect. Yet no one should run to the extreme of either of these types, but rather we should in some degree combine them both in ourselves. The worker that is always distracted with many things and gives no time to meditation is likely to be short-sighted and shallow, and to grow sordid in his tastes and low in his ideals; and the thinker that cuts himself off from service and shuts himself up in his cell of meditation grows unpractical and useless, morbid and selfish. But combine the two qualities, activity and meditation, society and solitude, work and worship, and they form a symmetrical, healthy and strong life.

4. How did Jesus answer this rebuke and demand of Martha? He did not take sides with Martha against Mary, but rather took Mary's part and rebuked Martha herself: "Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: for Mary hath

chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Jesus did not condemn Martha for her activity in preparing the dinner: such work was necessary and good. Active service is ever good, and our lives should throb with it. But Jesus did intimate to Martha that her activity was one-sided and lacked a vital part. She was putting the emphasis on the wrong place and was missing something immensely more important: she was intent on the feast of the table and was missing the feast of soul. Jesus did not care for any such feast as Martha was preparing; she misjudged his taste; he had other meat to eat, and cared more for Mary's sympathetic presence and meditative mood than for Martha's fussy preparation and rich dishes. Outward service for Christ, the temporalities of the church that adorn his house and, so to speak, set a fine table for him, good as they are in their place, are of small value in his sight compared with the spirit in his disciples that leads them to hold fellowship with him. However active a life may be in serving, though it may be overflowing with labors, yet it is a poor and pitiful life if it is simply burdened and distracted with the petty cares of the home and of business, of the world, and even of the church, and lacks the one thing needful.

5. What is this one thing that lifts all other things up into divine worth and beauty? It is the good part which Mary chose; and she chose to sit at Jesus' feet and hear his word. She sat at his feet in a threefold relation: Jesus was her Teacher, her Friend, and her Saviour, and these may be said to be the three greatest blessings in the world. A teacher gives us a new thought, a richer mind, and this is something precious beyond price. Jesus is the master Teacher at whose feet we may sit and learn the most splendid thoughts of God that will lift our lives towards the stars. A friend gives us fellowship and affection, and this is something still more precious than

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thought. Jesus is the Friend "above all others" whose fellowship and love will satisfy the deepest longings of our hearts. A Saviour is needed to cleanse us of sin and impart unto us eternal life. Jesus has power on earth to forgive sin, and as we follow him he will lead us through battle to victory in which we shall wear an immortal crown. Mary chose Jesus himself: he is the good part which can never be taken away. Our lives can be so hid with Christ in God that neither life nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God. Without him, how low and petty and sordid are all the pursuits and passions of this life! They are simply "many things" that distract and trouble us. But give us the "one thing needful," let us sit at the feet of Jesus as our Teacher, and Friend and Lord, and his Spirit in us will transform us and will transform them, taking them all up into the higher life of the Spirit, and then life, instead of being distracted with many things, will flow in one channel of purity and peace and power. And this good part shall never be taken away from us.

## XXXI

### ARE THERE FEW THAT BE SAVED?

And he went on his way through cities and villages, teaching, and journeying on unto Jerusalem. And one said unto him, Lord, are they few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in by the narrow door: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, open to us; and he shall answer and say to you, I know you not whence ye are; then shall ye begin to say, We did eat and drink in thy presence, and thou didst teach in our streets; and he shall say, I tell you, I know not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and yourselves cast forth without. And they shall come from the east and west, and from the north and south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.—*Luke 13: 22-30.*

JESUS at this time was working his way southward through the region of Perea on his last journey to Jerusalem, and, as usual, was ever busy teaching in the towns and villages through which he passed. One day a man asked him a question. The questioner is unnamed and remains unknown, but his question is recorded on the imperishable page of the gospel, accompanied with an answer of large meaning and pointed personal import.

1. “Lord, are they few that be saved?” was the question that was asked. The question is an attractive one. The multitudinous sea of humanity beats around us and rolls beyond the horizon, millions upon millions. The generations in countless succession have marched down

from the past across the plain of earth out into the unseen. The number of human beings that have appeared and disappeared mounts up into multitudes that overpower the imagination. Whither are they all going? Do they melt back into unconscious, impersonal existence, like snowflakes in the ocean, or does the stream of conscious life flow on? Does the main river of human life go pouring down over the precipice of perdition into everlasting darkness, and only a small rivulet reach the peaceful harbor of heaven, shut in by the shining hills of God, or does the main river flow into the harbor and only a little rivulet go trickling down over the precipice? The question is one we cannot escape asking at times, and the answer goes deep into our thoughts of the universe and of the character of God. We must reach some ground of reasonable assurance on this subject, or faith and hope would perish. Yet the question may easily be pushed too far in our thoughts. It soon takes on speculative aspects and runs beyond our knowledge and needs. It grows morbidly curious over matters that do not concern us, and attempts to pry into secrets that are wisely hidden from us. Such questions are especially apt to draw us off from practical points and personal duties. We may become ingenious and expert at asking and arguing such questions, and yet miss the plain matters of the law. Speculative theology is a poor substitute for practical piety. There are many questions that we must leave unsolved, and fall back upon the fundamental ground of faith: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

2. Jesus gave an answer to this question that is marvellous in its wisdom, its wide implications and its personal application. "Strive to enter in by the narrow door," was his first answer. How sharply does Christ turn the impersonal, speculative question into a personal, practical duty! He refused to gratify idle curiosity or to

become entangled in a fruitless controversy, and called the questioner off from the field of speculation and bound him down to a practical point. Where people in general are going is nothing like so important a question with us as where we, in particular, are going; their destiny does not compare in clearness and urgency with our duty. While we are working up a great debate over the question whether few or many are saved, Jesus turns upon us with the command, "Strive to enter in by the narrow door." "Never mind about others; make sure of yourself." This answer makes clear several practical points. It assures us there is a door of salvation. We are not hopelessly bound down in the bondage of sin and shut out of the kingdom of righteous character and life, but there is a door opened through which we may pass from darkness to light, from death to life; and this door opens a passage through the mountain wall of death into a world of eternal life. Yet the door is narrow, and this is a word of warning. It is not so wide that we cannot miss it and may drift through it with the crowd. It is broad enough to let the earnest seeker in, but it is narrow enough to shut the careless and indifferent out. Therefore, we must strive to enter in; we must desire salvation, seek for the door, not try to climb up some other way, and concentrate our energies upon the one point of getting in. All good things must be sought; the higher the personal attainment the harder we must strive to get it, and the kingdom of heaven should be stormed by violence. Here is the first answer to this speculative question: Make your own calling and election sure, and work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

3. Jesus proceeds to enforce this personal application with a fatal possibility and solemn consideration. Many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able, for the door shall be shut. This seems to run counter to the funda-

mental teachings and promises of the gospel which so often assure us that he that seeks shall find and that him that cometh shall in no wise be cast out. Yet this warning is no unauthorized or incidental teaching, but is the utterance of the Lord Jesus himself and is enforced by the emphatic statement, "I say unto you." The gospel opens a door for us and is of mercy all compact, but it does not renounce all conditions and let every one in on his own terms. It has rigid requirements, appointed means and set times. The possibility of being saved would lose its significance if it were not matched with a possibility of being lost. We must embrace this offer of salvation in the right way and at the right time, or it will pass from us. It is one of the fatal possibilities of life that doors may be shut: the door of education, the door of a trade or profession, the door of friendship. When we pass the appointed time of entering these doors they are generally closed against us forever. So it is with the door of the kingdom. If we do not enter it in the day of our opportunity when habits are plastic and the heart can hear, it may fly shut against us so that our bitterest tears cannot open it. How many a one has passionately regretted that he did not become a Christian in early life or at some favored time when the door was near and entrance was easy? But now the door seems far off and shut. Hence we should strive to enter in with all our might while the door is open, lest the day speedily overtake us when we shall seek to enter in and shall not be able.

4. False pleas will not open this shut door. In the great day when the door is finally shut, many will begin to claim friendship with Jesus. They will say, "We did eat and drink in thy presence, and thou didst teach in our streets." Their plea is that they are not outcast heathens, but they are from Christian lands and grew up in a Christian atmosphere. They were brought up in Christian

homes; they had pious parents and were baptized in infancy; they ate at tables where the blessing was always asked and they daily kneeled at the family altar. Jesus taught in their streets; there were several churches in their town where the gospel was always preached and on various occasions they attended; if they did not attend, at least their wives and children did. Having been brought up in a Christian land and enjoyed the benefits of Christian civilization, having paid Christian taxes and even contributed to the support of the church, they now claim a Christian inheritance. But Christ will say to them that he does not know them and will tell them to go off. We may eat in the presence of Christ and sit close to the communion table, and not eat with Christ. Jesus may be teaching in our street, but we may not be his scholars. He must be permitted to come closer to us than our street, or we are not his. Christian bread, homes, streets, civilization, will not make us Christians. Heathen people regard every one from a Christian country as a Christian, but Christ knows better. Many people that here refuse to recognize the lowly Jesus will hereafter try to scrape acquaintance with the glorified Jesus. They will then remember that Jesus was often on their street and will claim that they always knew him. But Jesus will tell them that he never knew them and will pronounce the irrevocable sentence, Depart.

5. There will be many unexpected revelations and surprises on that day. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets, would be seen in the kingdom, "and you yourselves thrust out." The Jews had rejected and even stoned and killed some of these prophets that would be found in the kingdom. Even publicans and harlots should enter into that kingdom from which priests and Pharisees should be thrust out. So great will be the reversal of expectation that there are last which shall be first and first

that shall be last. A minister once said that if he ever reached heaven he should have three surprises: first, to find himself there; second, not to find some there that he had expected to see; and third, to find others there that he did not expect to see. Our judgment would be a poor basis on which to assign eternal destinies. We judge by outward appearances and we are blinded by self-interest. The Lord judges righteous judgment, penetrating to the heart and core. His judgment will reverse many of our opinions and bring out some startling results. Many a proud self-righteous man will then bite the dust. Some that stand high in the earthly church will be missing in the heavenly kingdom. Many a one that has here gone to a martyr's death, many a brave soul that has been misunderstood and persecuted, many a poor soul that has been despised, many a one that has here been cast out and classed with harlots, will there shine as the stars forever. Deep will be the disappointment, bitter will be the remorse of many when they see others that they scorned pass into the kingdom and they themselves thrust out. This possibility is another solemn motive urging us to strive to enter in.

6. The answer of Jesus thus far has almost totally ignored the point of the question, so intent is he on pressing the practical duty. But in closing he makes one statement that throws a flash of light on the speculative inquiry. "And they shall come from the east and west, and from the north and south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." This prophecy pictures multitudes moving from every quarter of the earth towards the city of God. The city itself lies foursquare, with three gates on a side, ready to receive the coming millions. Heaven is a vast metropolis and has many mansions. The divine mercy is as wide as the world and has provided an atonement that is sufficient for every man. Christ is the true

light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. All the intimations of the Bible are that many shall be saved. Abraham was promised seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand of the seashore; and John saw in heaven a great multitude which no man could number, out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues. The answer of Jesus plainly intimates that the saved shall far outnumber the lost. Heaven shall be a densely populated country, and hell shall be a penal colony. On this general intimation and hope our faith can rest, assured that, however it may be, the Judge of all the earth shall do right. One thing we certainly know, there is room there for us, and we should strive to enter in by the door.

## XXXII

### JESUS AT A FASHIONABLE DINNER PARTY

And it came to pass, when he went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees on a Sabbath to eat bread, that they were watching him. And behold, there was before him a certain man which had the dropsy. And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not? But they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go. And he said unto them, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a well, and will not straightway draw him up on a Sabbath day? And they could not answer again unto these things. And he spake a parable unto those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief seats; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a marriage feast, sit not down in the chief seat; lest haply a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him, and he that bade thee and him shall come and say to thee, Give this man place; and then thou shalt begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest place; that when he that hath bidden thee cometh, he may say to thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have glory in the presence of all them that sit at meat with thee. For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. And he said to him also that had bidden him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen, nor rich neighbors; lest haply they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, bid the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; because they have not *wherewith* to recompense thee: for thou shalt be compensated in the resurrection of the just.—*Luke 14; 1-14.*

**H**ERE we see Jesus in society. There is no recorded instance in which he declined an invitation to a feast, in which respect he stands in extreme contrast with John the Baptist who never accepted one. But Jesus was a man among men and

moved in all circles and currents of human life. We find him at a wedding and at a fashionable dinner party, as well as at a funeral and in the chamber of sickness. He did not stand aloof from his human kind at any point, but touched them in all their relations. The Christian is not to be a recluse and an ascetic, but is to mingle freely with his fellow-men. Society—even fashionable society—is not forbidden to him : all pure places and pleasures are his. The banqueting hall is open to him as well as the house of prayer. Jewish society in the days of Jesus displayed many of the traits and vices that we see in our modern society: it was ostentatious, insincere and selfish. The fine grace of hospitality was degraded into a means of vulgar display. Jesus moved through this tainted atmosphere and kept himself unspotted. Its evil spirit no more infected him than the murky air soils the sunbeam that shoots through it. He was in it, but not of it. He carried his religion into society and there emitted its light and distilled its healing balm. The Christian is still needed in society, not that he may conform to its sinful spirit and ways, but that he may transform it with Christ-like character and conduct.

1. It was a leading Pharisee that was giving this dinner. The Pharisees were the most bitter and dangerous enemies of Jesus, yet some of them were disposed to be fair with him, and on more than one occasion he dined with them. The motives of the host and guests at this feast were not above suspicion, for "they were watching him." Even their hospitality was not a pure and wholesome atmosphere, full of sunshine and good-will, but was tainted and poisonous. It was the Sabbath, and the manner of observing this day was a great matter with these sticklers for petty points. They were watching to see how he would behave himself on this day in the hope that they might find some ground of accusation against

him. There was present at the feast a man which had the dropsy. Just how he happened to be there does not appear. It almost looks as though the presence of such a man had been arranged by the Pharisees as a part of their plot: they were not above such things. It may have been, however, that the man had strayed into the feast himself, possibly knowing that Jesus was there and hoping for healing from him. The free access to such places in the east would permit this. Among all that distinguished and fashionable company it did not take Jesus long to pick out that dropsical man. His infirmity drew the sympathetic gaze of Jesus and crowded out of his mind all the attractions of the feast. The Pharisees were quick to note his interest in the afflicted man and thought their hour was come; they knew his disposition to heal the sick and hoped that he would now fall into their hands. Jesus caught their sinister look and proceeded cautiously. Before acting he submitted the case to their own judgment. "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day, or not?" So tightly had they spun their narrow restrictions around this day, so utterly had they missed its meaning and perverted its spirit, that they had come to deny the right of healing during its hours. They thought it the proper thing on this day to hold a feast at which they gave full play to all their vanity and selfishness, but they were shocked and scandalized at the thought that on this day a fellow-man should be relieved of the heavy burden of his infirmity. Nevertheless, when Jesus put the case before them, they held their peace. His question seems to have made them ashamed of their own heartless theory; the dignity of his person, the benevolence that beamed from his face, awed and silenced them. Then Jesus "took him, and healed him, and let him go." The work of healing being done, he continued his argument with the Pharisees. If any one of them had an ass or an ox fallen

into a well, would he not pull it out on the Sabbath? The peculiar Pharisaic ethics of the Sabbath permitted such help being given to a beast, and yet denied healing to a fellow-man. The inconsistency and inhumanity of their position seem to have penetrated even their dull minds and deadened consciences, and again they were silent. Thus Jesus brushed away these Pharisaic restrictions that crushed all the sweetness and light, health and healing, out of the day, and restored to it its freedom and usefulness. The ordinances of religion are appointed for the good of men and when rightly used are full of blessing. Yet their power for good is equalled by their power for evil when they are emptied of their meaning and mercy and turned into hard and harsh formalities. Nothing is more heartless than religion when it loses heart and becomes a mere matter of the head. The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, and this helpful and healing principle should rule all our religious regulations.

2. The next incident that occurred at this dinner party related to a point in table manners. Jesus who had not failed to see the physical infirmity of the dropsical man was equally quick to note the moral infirmities of the guests. He observed how eager they were to choose and seize the chief seats at the table. The conceit and presumption of the Pharisees and scribes on matters of etiquette were intolerable. They were punctilious and imperious on points of their own preferment and with shameless effrontery would push themselves into the foremost place. We are told that "at a banquet of King Jannæus, the rabbi, Simeon ben Shetach, in spite of the presence of some great Persian satraps, had thrust himself at table between the king and queen, and when rebuked for his intrusion quoted, in his defense, (*Ecclius 15:5*): 'Exalt wisdom, and she shall make thee sit among

princes.' " This uncivil and selfish strife was going on before the eyes of Jesus, and he courteously rebuked it. He softened his rebuke into a parable in which he told the guests that even at a wedding feast, much less therefore at an ordinary dinner party, they should not rush for the chief seats, lest they suffer the humiliation of being shown to a lower place; but that they should sit down in the lowest place, and then they might be invited to go up higher; and he framed his advice into the great principle that "every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." The root of all sin is selfishness, and Jesus detected this root blossoming out in the way men took their seats at a dinner table. Leaves draw their sap from the heart of the tree and reveal its inmost nature, and our table manners and our talk, even every idle word we speak, come from the heart and show what we are. The courtesy that leads one to be forward and rude in seizing a coveted seat at a table or on a railway train is a leaf of that poisonous root of evil that caused the Son of God to come into the world and be crucified on the cross. Jesus came to redeem our whole life down to its minutest details so that whether we eat or drink or whatsoever we do we shall glorify him. The Christian has no right to be ill-bred and selfish in manners, but should at all times and places wear the beautiful adornment of a considerate and courteous spirit. There is a principle of compensation at work in the world that sooner or later puts every man in his right place. Those who rush for and crowd into the chief places generally fall in time to their own level; and those who are modest and humble and take lowly seats have their worth found out and are invited to go higher. We should take the place that is assigned us and do our best work there, and our faithfulness will not be unobserved or forgotten, but will receive its due reward.

3. A third matter that came up at this feast related to the proper expenditure of wealth. The Jews were in the habit of making these Sabbath feasts costly affairs in which the main motives were the vanity of display and the effort to score a social triumph; and only those were invited who were of such wealth and social standing as could be expected to return the compliment with an invitation to a dinner that would be still more lavish in its luxury. Jesus noted this selfish spirit and laid down a different principle. He advised against inviting friends and kinsmen and rich neighbors, and made a plea for showing hospitality to the poor and afflicted, promising that such a spirit would bring blessing and be recompensed in the resurrection of the just. Of course he would not be understood as discountenancing the exchange of pleasant hospitalities among friends and neighbors, but only as condemning an exclusive selfish spirit and favoring such use of one's wealth as would share its blessings with the poor. As usual in the teaching of Jesus, this apparently trivial point involved a great principle. These Pharisees regarded their wealth only as a means for their personal gratification and never as a means of social service. This is a dangerous fallacy that poisons the possession of wealth at the root. Many rich people suppose that, since they have acquired their wealth by honest means, it is therefore their own to spend in whatever extravagant or fanciful ways their desires may demand. It is even thought by some that money that is poured out in costly luxuries helps the poor by giving them employment; whereas it is really a waste to society and increases the burdens of the poor. Money should be spent even in personal gratification only in such ways as will contribute to the general good of society, and he who by his wealth entices or compels many people into making useless luxuries for himself is thereby help-

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ing to impoverish the world. A London clergyman showed how much had been accomplished by the County Council in removing crowded and filthy tenements and replacing them with sanitary dwellings, creating parks, and correcting various social evils, and when asked what it had all cost, answered, "Just the price of one Lord Mayor's banquet." This illustrates the true use of wealth, and it is a principle that our multi-millionaires and all rich people should practice, or their wealth will breed corruption and ruin in society. Thus Jesus invited out to a dinner party took his religion with him and there applied it to the three great ends of healing an afflicted man, of teaching humility and courtesy in manners and in all the relations of life, and of setting forth the true principle of expending wealth; and there are no lessons that our society more needs to-day.

## XXXIII

### THE PRODIGAL SON

And he said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of *thy* substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country; and there he wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that country; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have been filled with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. But when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But while he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring the fatted calf, *and* kill it, and let us eat, and make merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.—*Luke 15: 11-24.*

THE Prodigal Son is the most beautiful and most precious parable uttered by Jesus. It is a masterpiece of picturesque and dramatic description, depicting human life in its many-colored aspects, revealing the interior play of its movements and motives, and portraying the vital workings of sin and salvation. It sweeps the whole circle of theology, starting with man unfallen in his Father's house, tracing his fall through

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alienation and degeneration down into degradation, and his return through reflection and resolution back to reconciliation, when he was once more a son in his Father's home, and the circle was complete.

I. First, we witness a scene of alienation. Two sons are enjoying their father's protection and love. The father was equally the father of both sons, though one remained loyal to him in the home and the other rebelled against him and wandered far. His fatherhood both antedated and outlasted his unfaithful son's rebellion, and he was still the father of the prodigal in his deepest degradation. This is the purpose and point of the parable. God is the Father of all men, of unconverted sinners as well as of believing saints. His Fatherhood is rooted back of redemption and back of the fall, and had its origin when he said, "Let us make man in our image;" and it survives through all human sinfulness. The father with his sons in his home pictures the ideal relation between God and his human children; a relation of protection on the one side and of obedience on the other, the whole relation being suffused with love and joy. Into this happy home crept a devil. The younger son asked the father for his portion of the property. He made no complaint against his father, he alleged no grievance, but some fatal thought had come into his heart of wider liberty and a better time elsewhere. The home seemed narrow and unattractive, and the world looked rosy and sin tasted sweet. So the foolish boy grew alienated from his father and asked for a division of the property and a separation. Sin starts in wrong thoughts of God, of his law and his life, and thinks it can find a better way. The father divided his property and gave the dissatisfied son his portion, for he could not have kept him in the home by force. God, having created us free moral beings, has endowed us with a degree of sovereignty which he can-

not infringe upon, and must let us do as we will. Our substance, character and destiny are committed to our own hands.

2. Events moved swiftly, and we next witness rapid degeneration. Not many days after the infatuated youth gathered all together and took his journey into a far country. Thought soon leaped into action, doubt started towards damnation. It is a terrible mistake to suppose that we can have evil thoughts in our hearts and not do evil deeds. If we doubt God we shall soon be on our way to the devil. He gathered all together, for when a man starts into sin he takes all that he has with him, property, habits, character and soul. Many a man flatters himself that he will take into the devil's country only one little portion of his substance, such as a single secret appetite, and that he will keep the rest safe in the land of good reputation, but in reality all that he has goes with him and at last shares his degradation. He went into a far country where he thought he would be free from all restrictions and could have the best possible time in doing as he pleased. The fatal thought is ever being whispered in our ears that the farther we can get from God and the freer from his laws, the more life and liberty we shall enjoy. In that far land he wasted his substance with riotous living. Life became a round of revelry and a whirl of pleasure in which his money was soon spent. Sin wastes substance. It never creates, but only destroys. It wastes property, money, and time. Vice is expensive, and the devil presents big bills. It wastes business, energy and skill. It wastes the body, poisons its blood, burns up its tissues, and rots its bones. It cuts deeper and slashes into character, deadens conscience, and destroys the soul bit by bit. Righteous living increases substance, but riotous living wastes it and leaves a man a financial, physical and moral bankrupt.

3. Next, we witness a scene of degradation. The prodigal had a good time while he moved through a many-colored maze of pleasure, but all the while he was swiftly sliding down and soon he reached the bottom. "When he had spent all," was the first signal of the end. Vice runs through with all that a man has. It has an insatiate greed that eats up the last dollar and the last atom of good. Then comes famine, and want begins to cry out in distress. It is the blindness of sin that it never looks ahead and considers the end thereof until it is reduced to beggary and its doom is upon it. The prodigal was forced to do something for a bare living, and he entered the service of a citizen of the country who sent him into his fields to feed swine. This was abhorrent work for a Jew and pictures the degrading slavery to which sin reduces its victims. The sinful pleasures that are at first sweet liberty at last become vile bondage. Wreaths of roses are transformed into coils of serpents. "The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices make instruments to scourge us." "And he would fain have been filled with the husks that the swine did eat:" this marks the lowest point of his degradation. He lived with pigs and was no better than they; in some respects he was worse off. Sin sinks the spirit in the flesh and reduces man to a beast. It turns the world into a pigsty and sends the soul to a swine-trough. While his money lasted he had plenty of friends and many scraped his acquaintance and were profuse in their flatteries, but now "no man gave unto him." Everybody cut his acquaintance, and nobody so much as recognized him or gave him a crumb of bread. Friendships cemented with sin will not hold together. Evil companions at length turn against one another and have no truth or honor or mercy among themselves. Sin is anti-social in its nature and work and at last cuts all friendly ties and reduces the evil-

doer to a terrible isolation in which no one cares for him.

4. We have now reached the turning-point in the prodigal's career, and it is marked by reflection. "When he came to himself" is the expressive phrase that introduces the change. The words imply that he had been away from himself, out of his right mind. Sin is insanity. It puts one out of his right mind so that he sees all things in wrong proportions and relations. It perverts the judgment and throws the brain out of gear with the world. This was the condition of the prodigal son in his downward course from his father's house to the swine-trough. When he started out an alluring scene lay before him and he saw all things in false lights and colors. Life was to be a continual revelry and he saw no wrong in it and secretly laughed at his father's Pharisaic views. His father stood in his way and he did not need the old man any more! But now his evil life has wholly changed, and the rosy hues that his imagination threw around it have all faded away and he sees its sombre shades and guilty features. He is no longer blinded to its wrong and ruinous nature, but he sees its sin; and his soul recoils from it as from a dreadful thing. Reflection has brought him to his senses and restored his sanity. Famine and want have been the hard teachers that have led him to consider. The swine husks were a continual suggestion of his father's house and the plenty that was there. So he has got back out of that false world, which his sinful imagination pictured, into the real world; his thoughts now correspond with things; his mind fits the facts; and he has so far come to his true self, he is a sane man. Reflection is the first step in repentance and there is always hope for a man that will stop to consider and thus come to his true self.

5. Reflection now ripened into resolution. "I will

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arise and go to my father," was the determination that grew up in his heart. The root of this resolution was the sovereign "I will." His will had brought him away from his father and now his will must take him back. His father could not prevent his departure and his father could not force his return. God can throw many influences around us to draw us back to himself; but he cannot force us back and we never shall go until our own soul gathers itself into a determination to arise and return to him. The prodigal's resolution grew along the three lines of faith, penitence and obedience. "I will go to my father," was his faith. He still recognized his father as his father and had confidence in him. He believed in his father and was willing to trust him, and this is faith. Faith is the first condition of approach to God. He that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. "I will say, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee," was his penitence. He did not come back claiming the rights of a son, but declaring himself unworthy to be called a son. "Make me as one of thy hired servants," was his obedience. He did not ask for ease and abundance, but for service and for any service however hard and menial it might be. Such faith, penitence and obedience are always the path that leads the sinner's feet straight back to his father's house.

6. The final scene is one of reconciliation. The heart-broken father had never forgotten that wandering boy. Through all the years he had hoped and waited for his return. The prodigal was approaching the old home with a trembling heart, wondering how he would be received. But the father was watching for him and caught the first glimpse while the son was a great way off, and he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. The son could not finish his penitent speech before the father had

ordered out the best robe and a ring for his hand and the fattest calf for a feast, and presently the old homestead, that had so long mourned a wandering lost son, gleamed with lights and resounded with the music of minstrelsy and dance. Once more the broken home was restored and redemption was complete. So waits the Father for the return of his human children and such is the reception they shall receive. The Father will never be satisfied and we shall never be saved until we are in his everlasting Arm. "And they began to be merry." This is the final outcome of salvation. "In thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore."

## XXXIV

### TEN LEPERS CLEANSED

And it came to pass, as they were on the way to Jerusalem, that he was passing through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go and shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, with a loud voice glorifying God; and he fell upon his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were not the ten cleansed? but where are the nine? Were there none found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger? And he said unto him, Arise, and go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

—*Luke 17:11-19.*

THE raising of Lazarus, which had just occurred, precipitated a crisis. The priests and Pharisees saw that they must take swift measures against Jesus, or he would sweep the city, and they would lose their case. They were about to seize him, when Jesus withdrew from Jerusalem and went up into Ephraim with his disciples for a season of rest and closer fellowship with them. It was the lull before the storm. The approach of the Passover drew him back to the city, whose welcome he knew would be the outstretched arms of a cross. He was returning to Jerusalem, moving along the border between Samaria and Galilee, when this incident occurred.

1. “And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off.” Common misery had brought these poor fellows together,

and, as they were of different races and religions, had even broken down the most stubborn barriers of separation and enmity. They stood afar off, for this was required by Levitical law (13: 46) and was a kind of quarantine to prevent the spread of the dreadful contagion. It is an interesting fact that in the particular region in Palestine where these lepers were, leprosy is still prevalent, and just such leper-bands are met there by travellers to-day. From the most ancient times leprosy has been regarded as a symbol of sin, and nothing else shows forth its fiery and fatal nature so vividly and terribly. "Leprosy is God's language by which he describes sin as it appears in his sight." The disease is hereditary and constitutional, it is not simply an affection of the skin, but it circulates in the blood. Sin has come down to us from our first parents and has infected the blood of the race. It is not a slight superficial matter, but it has struck to the heart and permeated our whole constitution. Leprosy is contagious, and sin is a poisonous emanation that spreads from soul to soul and breathes its foul contagion over the whole world. Leprosy at first may give no sign of its presence and for years may conceal its unsuspected poison, but all the while it is secretly lurking and working in the blood. How subtly can sin conceal itself in the heart of the purest babe, in the innocence of youth, and beneath the fair surface of the highest respectability and even of unblemished morality? Yet how surely is its dreadful poison there! The later stages of leprosy are a fearful prophecy of the final consequences of sin. The body rots away joint by joint, limb by limb, presenting a spectacle from which pity would fain hide its face: "Twisted limb and crumbling stump, visages from which the gracious human lines have been obliterated by a slow, fell process more awful than the snake's fang or the lightning's stroke." All this is only a shadow of the

fearful reality of sin, a fire that burns in the bones of the body and in all the faculties of the soul, eating them away bit by bit, and that will at last end in eternal burnings. This is not theological fiction. The hideous consequences of sin that we see on every side equal and surpass the horrors of the last stages of leprosy.

2. "And they lifted up their voices, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." They realized their own condition and were willing to take any steps that might lead them to relief. They had doubtless heard the reports that were flying around of the wonderful cures of Jesus, and this had kindled hope in them. When he drew near they roused themselves to reach him. Across the great gulf, physical and moral, that separated them from him they shouted their pathetic appeal for mercy. They had faith in him as being able and merciful to heal them, and they put their faith to the fullest test. In this they illustrated the first steps in salvation. Our first need as sinners is to realize our sinfulness. While the leprosy of sin is in its incipient and quiescent stages, we are in danger of underrating its seriousness and even of deriding it. Fools mock at sin. But it is an unfavorable and sometimes a fatal symptom in a disease for the patient not to feel it. Pain drives us to the physician. Sin must seize our conscience and pierce us deeply with conviction, and then there will be some hope for us. Having realized our condition we must then have faith in Christ and call upon him for mercy. All excuses and palliations of our guilt must be cast away, and we must throw ourselves upon his grace. We have heard of his healing power, we have seen his work, and we have abundant reason for believing in him and committing ourselves to him as one mighty to save.

3. Countless eyes had gazed with curious indifference or helpless pity on this roving band of lepers and nothing

came of it, but "when he saw them" something was done. It means everything, when we are in trouble, to get the right man to look upon us, and to whom shall we go in the leprosy of sin but to the Lord Jesus, for he only has words of healing and life. His pity is linked with power so that he can root out and destroy even the awful leprosy of sin. "Go and shew yourselves unto the priests," was his command to them. He immediately gave them something to do, instantly divine healing wedded itself to human help, and the two wrought together. God is always ahead of us in salvation, and yet he goes forward only as we keep up with him. His grace is poured into the channel of our activity, and unless we act his grace will not flow. No one was ever saved by sitting still, and if we should be released from the leprosy of sin we must get up and go. "Shew yourselves unto the priests," was their first duty. This was in accordance with Hebrew law (Lev. 14: 1-32) in which the priest pronounced upon the cleansing of the leper and thus virtually gave him a certificate of health. Jesus thus respected and obeyed the requirements of ceremonial law, he used existing ordinances, he kept his work inside the church. He came not to destroy but to fulfill the old Hebrew rites, and therefore he utilized them as far as he could. Jesus uttered the most scathing condemnation of that abuse of ordinances that turns them into an end in themselves, but he never abolished ordinances, and neither can we dispense with them. Salvation ordinarily flows in the channel of the church.

4. "And it came to pass, as they went, they were cleansed"; not before they started, nor after they got there, but as they went. Had they never begun to obey, they never would have begun to be healed, but the two things started together and obedience and blessing blended into one process. As they began to go in

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obedience to Jesus, Jesus began to heal them, and by the time they had reached the priests they were wholly healed, and thus service and sanctification were completed together. This illustrates a profound principle in human life and in divine grace. The best blessings of life do not come to us before service, or after service, but in service. There are rewards that are given to us after service. Wages are paid after work. Prizes are bestowed after they have been won. But these rewards are largely of an external and mechanical kind. They are generally some material thing, money, or property, or position, and these can be worn out, or burned up, or lost. But the best rewards of life are internal and spiritual, a part of our constitution, the development and enrichment of our own personality, and such rewards cannot be worn out, or burned up, or lost. These internal rewards grow up within us as we advance along the path of duty; our own obedience is transmuted into blessing. "In keeping of them there is great reward." Physical health and strength, mental development, all personal improvement, come to us in this way. Salvation itself follows this law. It is not an external reward that is bestowed upon us after obedience, but an internal blessing that grows up in us through obedience. We are saved only as we work out our own salvation. How does faith in Christ cleanse us of our sin and clothe us in his righteousness? Are these blessings bestowed upon us at the end of a long line of service, as wages are paid after work? Not at all, but they grow up within us as we believe and obey. Faith brings us into fellowship with Christ in which we are ever studying his thoughts and will, character and conduct, and cherishing them as our ideals. This roots them in our hearts and causes them to expel antagonistic thoughts and feelings. Obedience further roots and intensifies them in our character and conduct.

This process persistently practiced gradually cleanses us of the uncleanness of sin and weaves around us the robe of Christ's righteousness. Just as exercise in the gymnasium produces physical health, and study in the school produces mental development, so fellowship with Christ produces spiritual health and strength, purity and peace and power, development and enrichment of soul. As we obey we are cleansed. If then, we insist on having a certain degree of faith or feeling or goodness before we begin to obey, we never shall be saved; but if we start just as we are, as we go we shall be healed. The trouble with many is that they want Christ to save them before they begin to obey him, whereas he will save them only as they obey.

5. Nine of the healed lepers went off to their affairs, and only one turned back and glorified God and fell at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. The nine had faith enough to get something from Christ, but they did not have love enough to give something to Christ. They were concerned only with themselves and had no thankfulness or thought for him. They went off with their blessing as though they had stolen it and enjoyed a selfish salvation. There are many such selfish and mean Christians in the church to-day; they believe in Christ and confess his name, but they do not love him with a devotion that lays everything at his feet. Faith is incomplete and faulty until it flowers out into love and drops its finest fruits before Christ. And the world is full of people who take from Christ all they can get in the way of Christian benefits, Christian institutions, home and state, Christian light and liberty, education, morality and charity, and yet they give nothing to him. Had Christ never come into the world, where would these people be to-day, in what leprous paganism would they be lying? and yet they have never returned and given

thanks to him. Jesus was hurt by the failure of the nine to remember him, and he is always hurt when we fail to give him our love and praise. It was only the one that returned who received the full blessing: "Arise, and go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole." It is only when we give our best to Christ that he gives his best to us. Faith gets salvation, but love gets all the fullness of God. "And he was a Samaritan." How often are we put to shame by those that are inferior to us in birth and training and privilege? Jesus frequently scorched and burned the self-righteous Pharisees and scribes by teaching that Samaritans and heathen, publicans and harlots, should go into the kingdom of God before unfaithful Jews, and if we are unfaithful to our privileges the same condemnation shall come upon us. How much healing, what countless blessings, we have received; let us turn back and glorify God and fall at Jesus' feet.

## XXXV

### THE RICH YOUNG RULER

And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, *even* God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor thy father and mother. And he said, All these things have I observed from my youth up. And when Jesus heard it, he said unto him, One thing thou lackest yet: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. But when he heard these things, he became exceeding sorrowful; for he was very rich.—*Luke 18: 18-23.*

**I**T was a grave situation that confronted Jesus as he approached Jerusalem for the last time. Disciples were few, enemies were multiplying, hostility was growing intense, and the Cross was near. It was therefore an act of more than ordinary faith and bravery for this young ruler with all his Jewish pride of birth and position to kneel at the feet of the Nazarene and ask of him the way of life. Jesus looked upon him with sympathy and love: yet he dealt with him with absolute thoroughness. How stands the case between Jesus and the young man to-day? Precisely as it did on that distant yesterday: for he is the same Christ.

1. Combining the facts in the several narratives, we find that this young man had many good points and was an interesting character. He had youth, and this is a great blessing. The body glows with health, the intellect is bright, the memory has grip, imagination is vivid, and hope runs high. Life foams and sparkles. Youth holds the future in its hands and can carve its own des-

tiny. It is a grand thing to be a young man, especially in this wide-thinking, swift-moving day. He had wealth, and this also is a blessing. Wealth lies at the root of civilization. It releases us from slavery and lets us up into higher life. It is the means of obtaining the things that are good and beautiful. Rightly gained it is an honor to a man: for it speaks of his industry and thrift, his foresight and power; and especially of the service he has rendered to others: for no one can honestly get rich without helping to make others rich also. Great as is the power of wealth for evil, it must not be forgotten that greater still is its power for good, and honest wealth is an honorable crown. He had education, and this is a still higher crown and blessing. The ignorant man is not yet born, has not come into possession of himself, is not yet unpacked. Education is developed intelligence, and intelligence is power. It was not brawn that built that business block or swung yonder bridge into the air, but brain. A developed mind in its dignity, its pleasures and its power is one of the noblest possessions of life. He had an influential position, and this is a high attainment. It implies superior intellectual and moral capacity. It widens and multiplies power. Above all, he was unspotted. Character is the diamond that scratches every stone. It is the brightest jewel a man can wear and is the one possession that cannot be filched away from him. Let him be stripped of everything else, yet if his character remains untouched he is still rich and strong. Youth, wealth, education, position, and character—these points embrace all the good this life affords. They are the world's gospel. It would seem that when a man has these there is nothing more that he could desire. This young man had them all. His foot was on the top rung of the ladder. He had made his mark. Doubtless he was applauded and envied as one that had

made life a brilliant success; and doubtless also he was universally regarded as one that was completely satisfied and joyously happy.

2. Yet he was not. Notwithstanding his youth, wealth, education, position, and character, there was a secret yearning and trouble in his heart, a great void in his soul; and he came to Jesus crying out for something better, even eternal life. So is it ever with us. In our blindness we think the things of this life would satisfy us. One thinks, "If I could only blot out my wasted years and recover my youth and begin life over again, I would ask nothing more." Another thinks, "If I could only get through college and step out into life equipped with an education, I would have all I want." Another says, "When I reach a position of influence and honor, when I get that office, I shall be content." And many a one imagines, "When I have made my fortune, when I touch the hundred thousand or million dollar line, I shall stop satisfied." In all these thoughts men are deceiving themselves. No sooner do they obtain these things than they want something more. Often the more of them a man has, the more dissatisfied and restless he is. For these things do not reach the deepest needs of the soul. They feed its lower nature, but not its higher spiritual nature. They do not touch the guilt of sin. They have no word of comfort in sorrow, or word of faith and guidance in the presence of the mystery in which we are environed. They do not satisfy the religious nature of man. They leave out God. The child of immortality in us may have its voice stifled in the rush of business and the whirl of pleasure, but there are times when it cannot be hushed and will cry out. However successful one may be in this world, though he may win wealth and honor and be built up in power and pride, let him not think that all this will satisfy him, for deep in his heart is

a spiritual need that can be satisfied only at the feet of Jesus.

3. How did Jesus receive this young ruler kneeling before him? Did he open the door of his kingdom and let him in as he was? No, the ruler was not a saved man and was not admitted into the kingdom. What a light does this throw upon Jesus and upon his kingdom. Had he been a human teacher, or founder of an earthly kingdom, how gladly would he have received such a wealthy convert and influential accession to his cause? But, much as he loved the young ruler, he no more relaxed his supreme demand for him than he would have done for publicans and harlots. The kingdom of God is no respecter of persons, and all must enter through the same narrow way. Why should this ruler have been admitted? His youth did not entitle him to the kingdom, for all are born in sin, and the comparative innocence of youth needs cleansing as well as the saturated sinfulness of obdurate old age. His wealth could not put him into the kingdom, for, although a golden key will unlock many a door of earth, it cannot open the door of heaven. His scholarship did not fit him for the kingdom, for there are educated devils as well as educated saints. Intelligence is simply a sharp tool which a bad man can use as deftly as a good man. His official position could not put him into the kingdom, for no human crown of power and honor can influence omnipotence. But did not his spotless morality fit him for the kingdom? No, Jesus did not receive him even on this ground. Morality, by which is meant a correct outward life, is necessary to eternal life; without it no one shall see the Lord. But it is a consequence of salvation and not its cause. In itself it cannot reach eternal life. It does not go deep enough, for it cannot cleanse away sin and make the heart pure. And it does not go high enough, for it does not reach

God and live in fellowship with him. It is short at both ends. It is good in many ways, but it will not bridge the chasm of sin, and if this is all we have we are stopped on the way to eternal life. No, this rich and powerful young ruler of spotless morality who would have been gladly received into any society or kingdom of earth was not fit for the kingdom of God.

4. And Jesus said unto him, "One thing thou lackest yet: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me." What a search-light does this throw into the young ruler's heart? Jesus looked through his riches and honors and moralities, the outer appearances that men saw only, into the central spirit of his life and saw that that spirit had a selfish core. All his good qualities and possessions were centred in his own interest; he was living for himself. To break him of this wrong motive at the root of his life, Jesus commanded him to sell all and give to the poor. Not that this is always necessary to salvation: but it was necessary in his case; and it may be necessary in our case. The meaning of some great loss and sorrow in our life may be that we must give up all that we may give ourselves to Christ. Then to shift his self-centred life to its true centre, Jesus said to him, "Come, follow me." The one thing lacking in the young ruler was the total surrender of his heart and life to God and Christ. His heart was not right; and being wrong here he was wrong everywhere else. The one thing that admits the soul into the kingdom is faith in Christ: faith that takes up the cross: the cross of penitence and confession and obedience and suffering; and follows Christ in thought and word and deed, in spirit and in life. We cannot do any of these things perfectly; but we can begin, and this beginning is the turning-point of life, the one thing needful that puts us into the kingdom. Hence

how important is this one thing? How important is any one thing that is fundamental? A watch may be perfect in all its wheels and jewels and yet, lacking a mainspring, which is only one thing, be as useless for keeping time as a stone. A will may be just in its distribution of property and generous in its charities and yet, lacking the signature or a single stroke of the pen, be invalid. So there is one act and state of soul that is vital to eternal life: faith in the Son of God; and when this is lacking all things else are in vain. One may have many excellent things: good health, business capacity, intellectual training, wealth and position, an unblemished character, and yet, lacking devotion to the Son of God, not have eternal life. Men are disposed to think that, if they have some excellent qualities, they have enough, though they may lack faith in Christ. If they are right in the main, they say, they will be saved. But the watch without the mainspring has many perfect parts, yet these cannot keep time. The will without the signature may have many excellent features, it may be right in the main, but this cannot make it valid. He that has many good things but lacks the one essential thing is not permitted to pass even in this world; neither is he in the spiritual world. It is not our good things, however many and beautiful they may be, that save us, but only the grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ; and when this is lacking we lack the one essential thing and cannot enter the kingdom.

5. "But when he heard these things, he became exceeding sorrowful; for he was very rich." His wealth was so deeply woven into the web of his life, the world had thrown such a spell over him, that he would not break away. And so he turned his face from the kingdom and we hear of him no more. Young men, make no mistake at this point in life. Play not fast and loose with great questions of eternity. Live not a life that goes

no deeper than the flesh. Do not confuse outer appearances with inner realities; morality with eternal life. Do not imagine you can turn your face from Jesus Christ and be as good as ever. Whatever separates you from Christ, whether some outer obstruction or some inner reluctance, put it from you. Clear the path between your soul and God. Hear the voice of Christ, and come, take up the cross, and follow him.

## XXXVI

### BLIND BARTIMÆUS

And they come to Jericho: and as he went out from Jericho, with his disciples and a great multitude, the son of Timæus, Bartimæus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the wayside. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And many rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried out the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and said, Call ye him. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good cheer: rise, he calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, sprang up, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered him, and said, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? And the blind man said unto him, Rabboni, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And straightway he received his sight, and followed him in the way.—*Mark 10:46-52.*

**J**ERICHO means the place of fragrance, the city of aromas, so named from its balsam gardens and spices that scented all the air with sweet odors. The founders of the city named it better than they knew, for Jesus perfumed it with some of the most gracious odors of his ministry. Here he healed Bartimæus as he sat by the roadside begging, and saved Zacchæus as he sat perched in a tree. One day there was a great sensation in the sleepy old town. Word flew around that the Nazarene Prophet would pass through. He was now everywhere famous as a mighty wonder-worker and bold preacher, and it was understood that the great ecclesiastics up at Jerusalem were about to take decisive action against him. The streets were lined and thronged with sight-

seers waiting for his coming. In all that multitude, possibly the two men who had the hardest lots, for whom there was the least love, and on whom there was the slightest expectation of any blessing alighting were Bartimæus and Zacchæus; yet they were to be picked men and on them the greatest blessings were to fall that day; and out of all that crowd their names are the only ones that have come down to us. The last may be first.

1. As the throng went pouring by, a man sat by the roadside in pitiful helplessness. He was blind, and is spoken of as though he were a well-known blind man, a familiar character, in the town. The world, so full of brightness and beauty for others, was for him unbroken night; and where others found a plain path for their feet he could only grope and stumble around in the darkness. Possibly as a result of his blindness Bartimæus was a beggar. There he sat by the wayside day after day waiting for any passing friend or stranger to drop a bit of money into his hand; probably he was half starved and did not have rags enough upon him to cover his nakedness. His beggary was the other side of his blindness; the two things were tied together, for all evils have affinities for one another and are woven into the same web. It is no straining of things to see in this blind beggar a picture of the sinner. Sin is a blindness that spreads its night over the mind and heart, dimming and darkening all the vision of the soul. And beggary of the body is not the only or the worst kind of poverty: poverty of mind and heart is deeper still. It is no uncommon thing to see among us souls so poor in virtue that they have not upon them rags enough to hide their moral nakedness and vileness from our sight. If the sinner says that he is not conscious of any such blindness and nakedness, this is no alleviation of his condition, but only a deeper degradation. "Thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have

need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

2. What were the steps in this man's salvation? "And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth." How did Bartimæus know that it was Jesus who was passing? He could not see. "They told him," Luke records, and "he heard," Mark tells us. Here is a hint for us as Christians. That blind man could not have known what was going on and would have missed this great opportunity and blessing of his life if some one had not told him that Jesus was passing by. And how shall the blind souls sitting all along the wayside of life know of this great salvation if we do not tell them? Verily we are responsible for bringing the good news to them; and we ought to tell it to them so plainly and earnestly that they will catch the meaning of the message and come to the Saviour. "He began to cry out." We can almost hear his sharp cry cutting through the confusion of that noisy oriental crowd. This man knew his condition, and he caught at the name of Jesus of Nazareth as at something that would bring him help. He did not know much about the passing Saviour, but he knew enough to call upon him, and his soul went out in one agonizing cry. What did he cry? "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me." This man must have been guided by the Spirit of God, for he knew what to ask for. In nothing can we make bigger mistakes and more completely miss the point than in our prayers. The beggar did not ask for money, as we would have expected, for money would have done him no real good: money could not have cured his blindness and would not have cured even his beggary. He did not ask for justice, for he could not have stood that. Not for money, nor for justice, but for mercy did he cry. Mercy must ever be the first word in our petition to God, and it is only along this path that we can come

to the throne of grace. We do not need money as our chief necessity, for money cannot cure our blindness and poverty, but may only make them worse; and we do not want justice: God save us from that! Every one is carrying his own burden of wrong, is stung by his own sin, and out of the pit of his guilt must vehemently cry unto God in the sweet name of mercy. "Have mercy on me": not, Have mercy on my enemy, or my neighbor, who is a worse man than I am, but, Have mercy on me, Bartimæus. "God be merciful to me, the sinner." When we get concerned about our own sins and cry for God's mercy upon us, we are close to his forgiveness and salvation.

3. Now what happened? The Man who can give sight is passing by and the man who has no sight is calling upon him for mercy. We would now expect that the multitude with great alacrity and gladness would clear a path and get the sightless man to the sight-giving Man. But what says the record? "And many rebuked him, that he would hold his peace." They tried to stop his cry and said harsh things to him, perhaps some of them swore at him and threatened to strike him if he did not keep still. It is bad enough when men refuse to help others in distress, but how much worse is it when they put themselves in others' way and try to shut them off from the very mercy of God. This is something that many a man meets in trying to enter the kingdom. A man is addicted to intoxicating drink, and the spirit of penitence gets into his heart and he strives after a better life: what often happens? Do his companions rejoice in the change and encourage and help him in it? No, they often rebuke him and ridicule and taunt and tempt him; they will lay traps to catch him and will even put the accursed bottle to his lips. When we see such things we can well believe that there are demonized men. The re-

bukes and sneers of worldly companions are often a hindrance to coming to Christ. While there are holy and strong influences ever striving to lead us through penitence and faith into the kingdom, there are other influences endeavoring to hush up conscience and keep us out; and if we would reach the kingdom we must strive to enter in. What did blind Bartimæus do under this cruel conspiracy to keep him quiet? "He cried out the more a great deal." The heartless crowd could not hush him up, the chance of his life was before him, and he was bound to have it. Shall we be less earnest and brave, and let ungodly rebukes and scoffs without, or false excuses and fears within, keep us from taking a step we know to be right? The more wrong influences try to quiet conscience and hold us back from obedience, the more a great deal should we resist them and press towards action. "And Jesus stood still, and said, Call ye him." While the multitude was trying to hush the blind man's cry, Jesus was standing still to hear him. "And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good cheer: rise, he calleth thee." Either there was a change on the part of those who had tried to keep the blind beggar quiet, seeing now that he was about to be honored, or there were some better disposed persons who were willing to help him; and these were the first words of hope that reached him and must have fallen like the first rays of light on his eyes, kindling the first gleams of a great joy in his heart.

4. We have now reached the vital point of action in the narrative. The critical question now is, Will the blind beggar rise, or will he sit still? He can do either and thus determine his condition and destiny; and to this far-reaching point of decision does every soul come. The beggar can sit still or he can rise: which does he do? "And he, casting away his garment, sprang up, and came to Jesus." You see how simple and decisive it all

is. That man might have sat there and let Jesus pass on. He had difficulties and fears and doubts enough to have kept him there if he had acted upon them. But acting upon his necessities and hopes and breaking through all opposition, he sprang up and came to Jesus, and that strenuous effort saved him. Such action is always the step that brings the sinner to the Saviour and binds the two together in eternal fellowship. And let us not overlook the little act of his casting away his garment. This was the loose robe that he wore around him and that would have impeded quick and free movement. Being a beggar's coat, it was doubtless a very poor coat, and yet it may have been of great service to him. But when it interfered with his getting to Jesus of Nazareth, off it came and away it went. Very often there are impediments clinging around our life that must be cast away in order to get to Christ. Does one have evil habits? off they must go. Does he swear, lie, defraud? off these must go. Does he indulge in sinful amusements? Away they must go. Is he in a bad business? out of it he must get. The rich young ruler was commanded to sell all that he had, and it may even come to this with some of us. Whatever would keep us away from fellowship with Christ, however closely it may be wrapped around our life and however dear it may be to us, must be cast away. And how insignificant is the loss in such an exchange? For his faded ragged robe Bartimæus received sight, a world of light and beauty; and for our rags of sin that we must cast off in coming to Christ we shall receive the beautiful garment of his righteousness, an hundredfold in this world, and in the world to come life everlasting.

5. So with his garment cast off Bartimæus came to Jesus, and Jesus said to him, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" The answer was, "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight." The beggar is very bold

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now, and will have no mere pittance of coin, but a whole world of light and life. And Jesus said, "Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole." That is the way faith works: it is the vital touch of the soul on God, and it brings life. How it does this we know not; we know only the result: but this is enough. "And straightway he received his sight, and followed him in the way." He could not follow any one in his blindness, but the sight he received from Jesus he now used in following after Jesus. Have we received any gift, gleam of light, flood of blessing, from God? Let us use it for God. With these blessings let us follow Christ. Only in this way shall we get more life out of them and glorify him.

## XXXVII

### ZACCHÆUS THE TAX COLLECTOR

And he entered and was passing through Jericho. And behold, a man called by name Zacchæus; and he was a chief publican, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the crowd, because he was little of stature. And he ran on before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, To-day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.—*Luke 19: 1-10.*

**Z**ACCHÆUS had obstructions in the way of his seeing Jesus. It is harder for some men to be saved than for others. Men differ widely in their inner temperaments and outer circumstances, and these act as hindrances or as helps to their entering the kingdom. Zacchæus had serious disadvantages in his way, but he got in.

1. His first disadvantage was his business. He was a publican, or collector of the Roman taxes. This business was unspeakably hateful to the Jews because it was the sign of Roman oppression and because in collecting the tax the publicans resorted to every kind of threat and fraud to extract the last penny out of their victims. Now imagine the situation of the Jew that had been willing to

engage in this business; a renegade Jew who had become a traitor to his country and had joined hands with its enemies and then had turned upon his own people to rob them. Would not all the contempt and scorn and malice of a hot-blooded oriental race be poured upon him? This was the position of Zacchæus. He was a chief publican, the head and front of the whole hated business. He was everywhere socially ostracized, there was no place for him among that people, and whatever was going on he was made to feel that he was not wanted. And so when Jesus came through the town that day and the crowd was thronging around him, Zacchæus had no chance. He was contemptuously thrust out and pushed back and told to take himself off. Zacchæus' business may be taken as a type of external difficulties in the way of seeing Jesus. Circumstances sometimes seem to block up the door of the kingdom. There are businesses which no man can follow and be on the road to heaven. There are even legitimate lines of business in which it is hard to be a Christian. Evil companionships are a bar to the kingdom. A low social condition, such as is found in the packed tenement houses and dens of iniquity in great cities, make it hard to enter. Thus there are outer obstructions that may lie across a man's path and seem to shut him out of the kingdom.

2. His second disadvantage was an internal or personal one: he was little of stature, short, a mere mite of a man. When Jesus came through the town, what chance did he have in that pushing, surging, hostile jam? If he had been a big burly fellow he could have crowded his way through, but with his puny arms and short legs he was shut out. It seemed that the very devil was taunting him with his infirmity, saying, "Aha! you little black fragment of sin, there is no place here for you: stay back." Thus the inner infirmity combined with the

outer obstruction to keep the renegade Jew from seeing Jesus. This shortness of stature may stand for any personal trait that makes it difficult for one to become a Christian. All have the inner weakness of original sin, but in some it seems to be quiescent, and in others active and virulent. There are traits of disposition, such as pride, stubbornness, love of pleasure and fashion, that make it hard for one to enter the kingdom. Evil habits are chains upon the soul. Thus there are difficulties external and internal in the way of becoming a Christian, just as there are in the way of any good thing. Zacchæus' case seemed hopeless that day. With the outer burden of his unpopular business and the inner infirmity of his short stature, he appeared to have no chance of seeing the Prophet. Did he then give up and sullenly go back home? No, he came there to see Jesus, and he did see him. So the little man has pluck. There is not much of him, but what there is of him is good stuff. His difficulties could not keep him out; and our difficulties cannot keep us out of the kingdom, if we only will go in. God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape.

3. How did Zacchæus overcome these difficulties? He sought to see Jesus. Probably his desire at first grew out of curiosity. He had heard of Jesus and knew that he had dared to rebuke and scorch the Pharisees, the bitterest enemies of Zacchæus, and he longed to see the man, and perhaps had some dim hope of receiving good from him. Curiosity is not a high motive, but it is a good motive if it brings one to Jesus. It is the entering edge of knowledge and may be the entering edge of faith. Salvation always starts in desire. No one can be saved who does not desire to be saved. Zacchæus now put his wits to work and began to invent expedients. If

he could not get through that crowd he would try getting ahead of it. And so he ran; his legs were short, but he made good use of them; and thus he got to a point where the way was clear between him and Jesus. Some difficulties that lie between us and the Christian life, we may not break through or scatter, but we can get away from them. One may not be able to destroy his bad business, but he can get out of it. He may not be able to convert his evil companions, but he can withdraw from them. Zacchæus not only ran, but he climbed; he pieced out the shortness of his stature by adding to it the height of that sycamore tree. He not only got away from the crowd, but he got above it so that he could see over it. To see Jesus we must get up above the earth into a higher point of view. We are too often down among a worldly crowd where we cannot see Christ. Let us get up into some tree of better thought and purpose, come up to the house of God, climb the tree of penitence, get up into the loftiest branches of prayer, and we shall see Jesus. Thus Zacchæus turned these very obstructions that kept him away from Jesus into stepping stones to bring him near. That hated Jew that had no chance in that hostile crowd, that little man of short stature that could not see anything, got the best view of Jesus that day. So may we turn our hindrances into helps, and if we must get to Christ through obstructions and infirmities and temptations, we may get all the closer to him.

4. Thus Zacchæus found Jesus. How, now, did Jesus find Zacchæus? He came into Zacchæus' town and down Zacchæus' street and along to the tree where Zacchæus sat perched, and then he looked up and the Saviour's eyes looked into the sinner's eyes and they were met together. Zacchæus climbed that tree to see Jesus, and to that same tree came Jesus, we know not how far, along what

weary way, to see Zacchæus. Long before Zacchæus climbed that tree Jesus was on his way to see him. The Saviour started to find us before we ever started to find him, even before the foundation of the world. "And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and said unto him." How unexpected and startling was this address to Zacchæus and to the multitude? Zacchæus probably had no thought of being recognized or even of being seen by Jesus. The people also had no thought that Jesus would take any notice of Zacchæus; he was the last man in their judgment that had any such chance. But at the place where this man sat in the tree Jesus stopped and looked up and said unto him. What did he say? He did not say anything unkind to him. He made no allusion to his business, or reputation, or unjust practices. Not a word was said to sting and humiliate him before the crowd. But Jesus simply said: "Zacchæus, come down; I am going home with you to-day." The effect was electrical. The people were astonished and grew critical and resentful. Many were shocked and scandalized at the dreadful turn of affairs. "Gone to be a guest with a sinner," was their contemptuous judgment. But Zacchæus was as one in a dream. He had never heard such words before. They were the first human, brotherly words addressed to him since he had taken up the business of collecting taxes. They touched a chord in his heart that had long been silent. They made him feel that he was not an outcast and was still human. Jesus simply treated this lonely, persecuted man as a brother. And it broke him all up; it melted him into instant faith and love and obedience; and he made haste and came down and received him joyfully; and he renounced his sins and would replace every fraudulent tax fourfold. Conversion struck clear through him. Even his pocketbook did not escape. And Jesus went home

with him, and said unto him, “to-day is salvation come to this house.” This is the Gospel in its simplicity and beauty. Jesus came into the world, not as a hard master to condemn us, but as a Brother to show us the Father and fill us with the love of God. His invitation is, Make haste and come down and I will abide with you. Do not stay up in that tree too long; do not take too much time in thinking over this duty and getting ready to act. Make haste, for there is need of haste. Delay is dangerous and the Saviour himself must soon pass on. Make haste, and come down, and go with him, and he will abide with you, and this day shall salvation come to thy house.

## XXXVIII

### A BEAUTIFUL DEED CRITICISED

And while he was in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster cruse of ointment of spikenard very costly; *and she brake the cruse, and poured it over his head.* But there were some that had indignation among themselves, *saying,* To what purpose hath this waste of the ointment been made? For this ointment might have been sold for above three hundred pence, and given to the poor. And they murmured against her. But Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor always with you, and whosoever ye will ye can do them good: but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she hath anointed my body beforehand for the burying. And verily I say unto you, Wheresoever the gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.—*Mark 14: 3-9.*

**S**I X days before the Passover Jesus arrived in Bethany and was received into the home of Martha and Mary, whose hospitality was one of the comforts of his homeless life.

1. While tarrying there a supper was given in his honor in the house of Simon the leper. Even under the shadow of the cross Jesus entered into social joys and was cheerful to the end. In the midst of the wide darkness and storm of hatred and death gathering around him was set this scene of friendship and love. There were present Lazarus, enveloped in the mystery of his resurrection, the active, fussy Martha, and the quiet, meditative Mary. We here witness a rare occurrence in the life of Jesus, his receiving gifts. We generally find him doing something for others, but here we find others

doing something for him. What was he receiving? First, his supper. Jesus did not have a house and table of his own. He was not poor as a pauper is poor; he paid taxes, and the disciples had a treasurer who carried a purse; yet Jesus had not where to lay his head. His disciples related many wonderful things about him; they told of his healing the sick and feeding the multitudes and raising the dead; but they never claimed for him a fine house and a great estate: on the contrary, they admitted that he was homeless and told how he was tired and thirsty and begged a drink of water from a Samaritan woman, and sat at meat in the house of Simon the leper. This Man's greatness could not be measured by material standards, and his life did not consist in the abundance of the things which he possessed. He who could create bread for five thousand men and yet had to receive his supper at another man's table puts to confusion all our standards and values and combines in himself the sublimest contradictions. He refuses to conform to our little rules and tests, there is something in him that escapes human limitations, and there is a mystery about him that compels us to see in him the Son of God.

2. Jesus received a second gift in this house. A woman brought an alabaster jar of spikenard, and, snapping off the slender neck, poured the costly fragrant ointment on Jesus, anointing his person and filling all the room with the perfume. This was a beautiful oriental expression of personal respect and devotion. The shadow of the cross was already on this little company of friends gathered with the Master. The meditative Mary was brooding over the impending mystery, her heart grew full of love, and she spontaneously poured it out in this expressive act. Simon's bread fed the body of Jesus, but Mary's devotion fed his heart. The one gave him physical strength for a few hours, but the other passed into

his soul and became its imperishable satisfaction and comfort. We should more frequently and fully manifest our love to one another. Love should not lie dumb and dormant in the heart, but should find rich expression in beautiful deeds. The gift may not be costly, and yet it may go deep into the heart and give strength for many days. The famine of bread in the world is often pitiful, but the famine of love is wider and deeper. If our love would only more often flower out into fragrant expression, it would make many a desert life rejoice and blossom as the rose. Mary did not intend her act as an ostentatious exhibition of her love, with her it was a silent deed, and yet she could not prevent her perfume from escaping and filling all the room. Love never advertises itself, and yet its presence cannot be concealed. Every beautiful deed emits fragrant odors and gracious radiations that steal through the world to sweeten and scent its air and bless and beautify many lives.

3. A strange thing now occurred. Some of the disciples saw Mary's act with surprise and indignation, and whisperings began to pass around among them which found outspoken expression. "To what purpose hath this waste of the ointment been made? For this ointment might have been sold for above three hundred pence, and given to the poor." These rough fishermen could not appreciate Mary's fine act. They were square-headed, hard-fisted, practical men, used to counting pence, and had no sentiment in them. They thought she had wasted her ointment and had nothing to show for it, whereas she might have sold it for hard cash with which she could have done much practical good and had something to spare for herself. If Mary loved Jesus, why did she not simply say so, and save her ointment? The pence view of things is still common enough among us. There are people that look at everything in this light.

They measure everything in feet or in pounds, and especially in dollars and cents. They call for statistics and refuse to believe in anything that cannot be put down in a column of figures. They come into the church and ask for the number of converts and baptisms. They pick up a report on foreign missions and figure out the comparative cost of converts of different denominations and possibly draw a conclusion to the advantage of their own Church. Such people generally have small respect for what they call mere sentiment. Affection and devotion are so much moonshine to them, harmless enough perhaps as long as they do not cost any money. Like Gradgrind they believe only in "facts, sir, hard facts." Such a man would give his wife money to buy a dress or a pair of shoes; if she were sick he would send for a doctor; but he would not think of giving her a present, such as a watch, simply to express his love for her. Why, that watch might be sold for fifty dollars, and this would buy a horse, or paint the barn! And he would murmur with indignation at the extravagant waste. Now the money view of things has its time and place and is then decisive. Statistics have their use and must often be compiled and consulted. There is much waste in the world that ought to be stopped. But there is saving that is loss, and there is waste that is wealth. The money view may be a money vice, and in some cases statistics can tell us everything except the truth. The finest and best things in the world cannot be measured and sold. We can compute the size of the earth, but not the value of the green grass and the blue sky. We can weigh the new-born baby in the scales, but not the mother's love for her child. Character cannot be measured with a tape-line or be sold by the pound. Love cannot be bought and sold in the market, any more than can sunbeams or bits of gorgeously-colored clouds. We have slipped far

away from the spiritual into the material when we begin to talk of pence. Affection, devotion, heart, spirit, are not in the same class with pence, and are not to be compared with mountains of gold. Judas gave voice to this criticism because he carried the bag and was a thief. His interest in the poor was affected and false, and his bitter sneer was simply the expression of his selfishness. His own palms itched for those three hundred pence. This makes Judas bad company for those that take the pence view of things and think that all wealth used as an expression of love or devoted to religion is waste.

4. Mary poured out her ointment as the expression of her love to Christ, and was that waste? Jesus himself did not think so. "Let her alone; why trouble ye her?" he said to these cold, critical disciples; "she hath wrought a good work on me." Mary had thought to use this costly ointment on the dead body of Jesus, but her loving heart had hurried her into its application while he was yet alive, and this act was grateful to him. We reserve too much affection for our dear ones until they are dead: it would be more appreciated while they are alive. It is better to have one rich, red rose in the living hand than to be smothered with flowers in the coffin. Was that waste that thus cheered the heart of Jesus and made him stronger to bear his cross? Was that loss that brought another soul nearer to him and melted it into his likeness? How can we do the poor the most good? Not by giving them pence, money, but by showing them sympathy and giving them a new spirit. Mary converted the fragrance of her precious ointment into the fragrance of her heart, and thus turned this material waste into richer spiritual wealth. There was more love in the world after this apparent waste, and the world was richer. The disciples were wrong in their coarse criticism, they did not know what they were talking about, they

were trampling upon the finest treasures of the human heart, they were impoverishing the world, they were unwittingly doing harm even to the poor, and this one timid woman was right.

5. This act of devotion drew from Jesus words of rare praise: "She hath done what she could." "Wheresoever the gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." No grander eulogy was ever pronounced upon man or woman. It is the brightest crown that can be placed upon human brow, and is a more imperishable monument than marble shaft, or tablet of brass. Yet Mary had done no great thing as men count greatness. She was not that finest idol of the world, a woman of genius. She had not written a great book, or charmed the world with her song. She did not have wealth, or influential family connections. She was only a plain, home-keeping woman, not to be distinguished outwardly from countless others. And she had simply broken a jar of fragrant ointment on Jesus as the expression of her devotion to him. But her fine act deeply touched and pleased Jesus and cheered his heart. It was not the greatness of the deed, but the purity and loftiness of the motive that received so bright a crown. This beautiful deed that men criticised and scorned has spread its fragrance through the whole world, and it is literally fulfilled that wherever the gospel is preached Mary receives her memorial of honor. To do what we can and thereby touch the limits of our responsibilities and possibilities, is the highest attainment and honor we can reach. More than this God does not ask, less than this we should not give. Doing what we can for Jesus Christ will win from him the same crown he gave to Mary, and will spread the fragrance of our deeds through the world.

## XXXIX

### THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

Tell ye the daughter of Zion,  
Behold, thy King cometh unto thee,  
Meek, and riding upon an ass,  
And upon a colt the foal of an ass.

And the disciples went, and did even as Jesus appointed them, and brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their garments; and he sat thereon. And the most part of the multitude spread their garments in the way; and others cut branches from the trees, and spread them in the way. And the multitudes that went before him, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, Who is this? And the multitudes said, This is the prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee. And Jesus entered into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold the doves; and he saith unto them, It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer: but ye make it a den of robbers. And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple: and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children that were crying in the temple and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were moved with indignation, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these are saying? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea: did ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise? And he left them, and went forth out of the city to Bethany, and lodged there.—*Matthew 21: 5-17.*

**O**N the morning of Palm Sunday there was a great stir in Bethany and along the roads leading to Jerusalem. It was understood that Jesus was to enter the city that day. The people were gathering in crowds and seemed bent on signalizing his

entrance with a popular demonstration. Jesus for the first time permitted a public recognition and celebration of his rights as Messiah and King. The end was approaching with fatal swiftness, and he had to offer himself as Messiah and Lord, even if it were only to be rejected. It was the spring-time and nature had set the scene in a framework of beauty. A mass of fresh colors lay palpitating upon the landscape. The dark rich green of the olives covered the hillsides, the air was balmy with the breath of spring and fragrant with buds and blossoms, along the eastern horizon stretched the blue rim of the mountains of Moab, and over it all flashed the splendor of an oriental sky. A colt was procured, and the disciples, having thrown their robes over it, placed Jesus upon it, and the procession started. It would not have compared in magnificence with many a procession that has attended the inauguration of a president or the coronation of a king; but it meant more for the world. In the enthusiasm of their joy the people tore off branches from palm and olive trees and carpeted the road with green, and even cast their garments in the way, while shouts rang in the air. Slowly the procession wound up the Mount of Olives. At the summit the road takes a sharp turn to the north, and at this point Jerusalem suddenly breaks into view. The sight is an impressive spectacle even at this day, but in that day it was counted one of the wonders of the world. The city sat like a jewelled crown on the brow of Mount Zion. In the foreground rose the marble walls of the temple of stainless whiteness, crowned with its glittering gilded roof, a mass of snow and gold; in the background stretched the streets and squares of the city; and over it all lay the spell of more than a thousand years of history, crowded with patriotic and religious associations. At the first sight of the city Jesus burst into tears. What an unaccountable

interruption of the festivities of the hour! Even in the midst of his triumphs and joys he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The procession swept down into the valley of Kedron and up the slope of Zion, gathering volume and intensifying its joy as it rolled along. It poured into the temple area and overflowed into the city. Jesus himself passed into the temple, cleansed it of its unholy traffic, and wrought works of healing. The crowds dispersed, and in the evening Jesus quietly returned to Bethany. Nothing seems to have been accomplished; and yet the triumphal entry was a parable of deep and rich significance.

I. The incident of sending for the colt is instructive. Jesus directed two of his disciples to go into a neighboring village where they would find an ass and a colt, which they were to unloose and bring to him; if any one questioned them as to their authority, they were to answer, "The Lord hath need of them." By this title Jesus Christ is the universal Proprietor and maintains ownership and mastership over all things. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. Our property, powers and attainments are rightfully his and ought to be instantly subject to his disposal. Yet a strange sovereignty is this which "hath need." The omnipotent Christ must have a colt; the Lord of glory is stopped until one of his humblest creatures is brought to his aid. Christ in a sense is dependent upon us. He works through means, and our human ability exactly matches his divine need. "And the disciples went, and did even as Jesus appointed them." Unquestioning obedience followed the command. They might have raised objections, pointed out the difficulties and dangers involved in such action, but they simply trusted Jesus and acted on his word. This is the secret of a plain path and a peaceful life. We are

trying to solve too many problems and to hew a way through providence, when we need only to trust God and let him order our steps. If we have a listening ear and an obedient will he will tell us where to go and what to do. We can go forward along every path of duty certain that we shall find just what he has told us. If the disciples found a colt as Jesus said, much more shall we in obeying him find light and life, since he has told us that he that followeth him shall not walk in darkness. They brought the ass and the colt unto Jesus. This is what they were sent to do and their service was complete. Duty may send us out from Jesus, but it always brings us back to him with something to lay at his feet. Out from him all blessings flow and back to him all service comes.

2. All things were ready, and the procession started. Garments were cast down and greenery strewn along until the dusty road became a carpeted and embroidered path fit for royalty, and the hills rang with shouts, "Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." Several ideas were expressed in this action. Disciples must prepare the way for Jesus. He cannot go through the world on a triumphant march unless we go with him and before him and make a path for him. Human influences may open the way along which the Spirit of Christ gets into human hearts and into the world. This service costs sacrifice. Garments must be cast down to make the way along which Christ walks. Things that are good and precious to us, our possessions, time and talents, our garments, the very necessities of life, life itself, must be cast down. Nothing is too costly to become a part of this path. The feet of Jesus should not touch the common dust, but should press upon our most precious things. And this path should be a path of beauty. The highway

of salvation along which Jesus walks should not seem to be a hard and dusty road, but it should be so carpeted and festooned that the world will see it is a way of pleasantness and a path of peace. The most prominent feature of this procession was its enthusiasm. These people were not afraid to shout. They believed in Jesus with all their might and expressed their devotion in oriental outbursts of joy. They were not ashamed of their King and when the city was stirred and shaken with excitement and the question of the hour was, "Who is this?" they boldly answered, "This is the prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee." It took some courage to say that up in Jerusalem. The people grew wild in their enthusiasm, and the hills near and far caught up and flung back their glad hosannas. This is a spirit that is evaporating out of our religious life and that we need to keep and intensify. We have grown so respectable and formal that in a religious meeting we can scarcely speak or move. Even the Methodists have ceased to shout or say Amen. We have frozen into religious icicles, and the Salvation Army soldiers are now doing the shouting. Enthusiasm is fire, it is life, it is God in us. We need more of it and abundance of it, even though it offends some refinements of taste and breaks into some excesses, for it is the only religious life that will prepare the way for Christ. Frozen Christianity will never warm the world into life.

3. The deepest meaning of this event was expressed in the constant cry of the multitude, Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Jesus was not entering the city as a triumphant conqueror, trampling down its liberties and slaying its inhabitants as the Romans had done. Neither was he coming to execute upon it just judgment. No sword was in his hand, over him floated no blood-stained banner. His mission was salva-

tion, his kingdom was peace. He was coming to preach good tidings unto the meek; to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound. This is still the meaning of his mission. The Triumphal Entry was a picture and parable of his blessed progress through the world. Since his advent history has been his majestic march. Eighteen centuries have traced his stately step-pings across the continents and over the seas. The procession of believers attending him has ever been a constantly lengthening and broadening multitude and has now grown into a vast number that is filling the world. And the shout that still attends this procession is, "Blessed is the kingdom that cometh." It is a kingdom, not of war and force or of meat and drink, but of righteousness and peace. It brings forgiveness and purity, brotherhood and love. As it rolls along it crushes old evils and leaves behind it a fairer world. Nothing can stop its progress as nothing can stop the rising of the sun. It is now pouring into heathen lands and will soon have moved around the world. Christ shall reign, and the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.

4. Criticism on this occasion was not lacking. When was there ever a day or event so successful and good that somebody did not find fault? We could infallibly name the critics on this occasion without seeing the record. "The chief priests and the scribes." Bigoted and blind to the last; never knowing the day of their visitation; zealous for the temple of the Lord and rejecting the Lord of the temple! The enthusiasm had become so contagious that the very children were crying their hosannas, but the ministers of religion were looking on with scowling, scornful faces. It was the children, too, that their criticism seized upon and objected to. Even yet young

people cannot show unusual interest and earnestness and enthusiasm in the church without exciting the disapproval and displeasure of some critics. These priests and scribes hotly said to Jesus, "Hearest thou what these are saying?" as though their presence and praise in the temple were little less than sacrilege. Let the young people keep quiet in the church lest they offend some of the doctors of divinity or some of the mothers in Israel. Jesus answered, "Yes, of course: cheery, hearty, yea, not without enjoyment of the ridiculous distress of the sanctimonious guardians of the temple." God loves children and Jesus hears them. Let the young people cry aloud in the church and rebuke them not! Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God has perfected praise, and we must beware of trying to silence their voices in the name of our superior wisdom. Having condemned the priests, Jesus "left them and went forth out of the city." The great day was over and nothing had come of it: Jesus was not yet king. Doubtless the disciples had had high expectations and thought that the procession and banners and shouts would surely carry Jesus to his throne. But Jesus himself had entertained no such expectations and experienced no disappointment, for he knew that the kingdom of God cometh not with observation.

## XL

### PHARISEES CAUGHT IN THEIR OWN NET

But the Pharisees, when they heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, gathered themselves together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? And he said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like *unto it* is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hangeth the whole law, and the prophets. Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, What think ye of the Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, *The son of David.* He saith unto them, How then doth David in the Spirit call him Lord, saying,

The Lord said unto my Lord,  
Sit thou on my right hand,  
Till I put thine enemies underneath thy feet?

If David then calleth him Lord, how is he his son? And no one was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.—*Matthew 22: 34-46.*

DURING the last week in the life of Jesus, before the crucifixion, the Pharisees and scribes were busy with plots to entrap him. The triumphal entry had alarmed them, and they were determined to run no risk of an uprising in his favor and to make short work with him. On this day (Tuesday) they “took counsel how they might ensnare him in his talk.” These doctors of divinity were great dialecticians, who had carried the art of theological hair-splitting to its finest point. Their whole system of theology was largely a set of artificial distinctions and petty points over which they

wrangle continuously. Ingenious "cases of conscience" and cunning catch questions were their stock in trade. On this occasion they sent some of their smartest men to Jesus with some of their craftiest questions on which they felt sure he would impale himself. First, they came to him with their alternative of whether taxes should be paid to Cæsar, or not. To answer either way they thought would be fatal to Jesus, and so they were confident that there was no escape for him. But he gave them a reply that frankly answered their question and yet so skillfully evaded their dangerous trap that "when they heard it, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way." Again, the Sadducees came to him with their artificial case of the seven brethren who had had the same wife, and again they thought they had him ensnared. But he gave them an answer out of their own Scripture that so confuted and confounded them that "when the multitudes heard it, they were astonished at his teaching." Thus these men, so wise in their own conceit, met in Jesus more than their match. He easily and instantly threw them into confusion and sent them away silenced and ashamed. Yet he always gave them fair answers and never resorted to mere verbal evasions and clever devices to meet their low cunning. He was so fully armed and finely poised that quick as a flash he could parry every thrust and show himself master of the situation. His transparent truth was his triumph. These dialectical combats between Jesus and the Jews are one of the marvels of the gospels. They have on them the inimitable marks of truth and never could have been invented.

1. When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had put the Sadducees to silence, they gathered themselves together for another trial. They felt that they were losing ground, and that something decisive and desperate must be done. A lawyer now stepped forth as their represent-

ative with his test question: "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" This was a favorite point of dispute among these doctors of the law. The question is not without its merits. There is an order of importance and precedence among commandments, and it is well for us to be able to distinguish universal and permanent principles from local and temporary precepts. How much of the practical wisdom of life consists in being able to know big things from little things? Especially is it important in religion to distinguish substance from form, spirit from letter, the grain from the husk. This is just what these learned doctors failed to do, and in their hands this question became an empty and wearisome dispute over Sabbath keeping and washings and phylacteries and fringes. Scripture study that so misses great principles and seizes on petty points, religion that degenerates into such miserable disputing, is as offensive to right reason as it is useless in life. This question was also further vitiated by the motive that prompted it. The lawyer was tempting Jesus, trying to puzzle and ensnare him, bent on gaining a personal victory rather than on discovering the truth. This is another danger that lurks in religious discussion. Denominational disputes have too often been carried on in this spirit. Scripture is too often made a mere debating ground. Whenever we find ourselves disputing with others more to convict them of wrong than to reach the right, or to prove our own superiority and gain a personal triumph, we had better quit.

2. The question had been prepared, but the answer was unpremeditated, and it is marvellous in its simplicity, breadth, completeness and conclusiveness. Jesus drew his answer out of the Scriptures (Deut. 6: 4, 5), and simply quoted the "Shema" (Hebrew for Hear, the first word of the quotation) which every devout Jew recited

twice a day. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment." Love is a comprehensive state of soul, gathering up into itself all the affections of the heart, the intelligence of the mind, and the energies of the will; and the highest object of this love, worthiest of all its warmth and wealth of feeling and faithfulness, is the Lord our God. This commandment is self-evidently great, overshadowing all others in importance, more urgent in its obligation and richer in its fruits. And it is the first commandment, for we must be right with God before we can be right with anything else. "And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Lev. 19: 18). This second commandment is the complement and completion of the first. Love to God immediately expresses itself in love to men, and thus the whole circle of being is flooded and irradiated with this golden light. If we love God we must love men, too, for men are the children of God and bear his image. This was Jesus' answer to the question, Which is the great commandment in the law? How he lifted it up out of the small casuistry and senseless quibbles of the Pharisees into universal principles and splendid usefulness! Jesus always looked straight and clear into the heart of reality and saw things in their right proportions. The great commandment loomed up before his vision as a majestic mountain, while all these Pharisac polemics lay as dust under his feet. And yet Jesus did not invent this commandment, or give it its first utterance: he simply quoted out of the Jews' own Scriptures a law that was as universal and as old as human life. The Pharisees knew this commandment and repeated it every day, and yet they were blind to its superlative significance and splendor. Are there not great laws and beautiful truths in the Bible which we fail ade-

quately to perceive and appreciate? It is not new truth we need, but a better understanding of old truth. "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

3. Jesus set forth the rank and relation of these commandments in the system of truth in a striking saying: "On these two commandments hangeth the whole law, and the prophets." Love is the centre of the circle of law, from which all the radii shoot and to which they all converge; it is the foundation on which the whole structure of law stands; the fountain from which all its streams flow. All other laws may be resolved into love, and love fulfills all other laws. Why should we speak the truth? Because we love one another; and we love one another by speaking the truth. Why should we be unselfish and gentle and kind towards others and minister to them with service and self-sacrifice? Because we love them; and we love them by being and doing these things. Even justice itself is a form of love: it deals with men according to their deserts, and this is best for them, and therefore is the action of love towards them. Love is not all softness, but has a severe aspect and may wield a sharp sword, and it is the love of God that gives birth to his wrath. Intelligent love in the heart, then, is the obedience of all law, and the fulfillment of all perfection. This spirit will infallibly shape itself into all right action and lovely deeds. Law and psalm and prophecy, Bible and church, creed and ritual, prayer and praise, are but means to this end. When love is nourished in the heart and expressed in the life, these means are fulfilled; but when love is wanting, they are empty and useless. Thus Jesus answered the lawyer, and the self-evident truth, simplicity and beauty of the answer drew from him a hearty approval (Mark 12: 33).

4. Having foiled the Pharisees and Sadducees in their

successive attempts to catch him in the net of their questions, Jesus now turned upon the Pharisees with a question himself, and soon had them struggling helplessly in their own net. "What think ye of the Christ, whose son is he?" was the inquiry which he flung at them. The question was no such quibble as the Pharisees affected, but it raised a matter of the first importance to the Jews in their day and of not less importance to us in our day. What we think of Christ is no mere question of theoretical opinion, or historical interest, or literary taste, but it is a vital principle that goes to the centre and core of our hearts and lives, and determines what we are and shall be. It sets up our standard of life, puts a heavenly vision in our sky, or sweeps that sky empty of any divine pattern and power. It brings us into personal union with Christ as our Lord, or separates us from him by a great gulf. This question in the morning of the twentieth century after it was first put is still the most vital question in the world and is throbbing in the blood of its best civilization. "The son of David," glibly answered the Pharisees, as though that question were easy—a mere child's question—and they were now ready for another that would more nearly match their learning. Jesus had another and promptly put it to them. He quoted a familiar passage cut of their Psalms and wanted them to explain how David could call the Messiah Lord and the Messiah be David's son. Instantly they were puzzled and had no answer. For years they had been poring over these Scriptures, counting their letters and raising a dust of small questions, and yet here was a large question lying on the very surface which they had not seen and sounded. If they had noted this unique and mysterious relation of the Christ to David, they would have enlarged their knowledge of the Christ, would have caught some glimpse of his divine rank, and then they would

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not have judged him by such low earthly standards and would not have been so blind to him when he came. There are abundant facts in the Bible and out of the Bible to show us Christ in his divine personality and power, if we will only see these facts and follow them. But if, like the Pharisees, we have our eyes fastened upon the small dust of earth, we shall miss the great, splendid things of the kingdom. Thus Jesus caught the men that tried to catch him; the tables were turned; the intended victim became the triumphant victor. "And no one was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions."

## XLI

### CERTAIN GREEKS

Now there were certain Greeks among those that went up to worship at the feast: these therefore came to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and calleth Andrew; Andrew cometh, and they tell Jesus. And Jesus answereth them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will the Father honor. Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. There came therefore a voice out of heaven, *saying*, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The multitude therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it had thundered: others said, An angel hath spoken to him. Jesus answered and said, This voice hath not come for my sake, but for your sakes.—*John 12: 20-30.*

“CERTAIN Greeks” came up to worship at this feast. These were not Hellenistic Jews, or Jews from Greek countries speaking the Greek language, but genuine Greeks who were converts in some degree to Jewish faith and worship. They heard of Jesus and wished to know more about him. They therefore found Philip, whose Greek name betrayed his Grecian affinity, and made their request to him: “Sir, we would see Jesus.” Philip seems to have realized that this apparently ordinary request was fraught with more than ordinary significance, and so he first reported it to Andrew, another disciple with a Greek name. These two

disciples went to Jesus (possibly taking the Greeks with them), and reported to him this request for a personal interview.

1. So far the incident suggests nothing extraordinary. People were frequently seeking interviews with Jesus, and these Greeks were only two or three people more. What significance attaches to this fact, why report so trivial an incident? But trivial incidents may be the germs of tremendous consequences, as the first acorn contained all the oaks in the world. The moment this request was reported to Jesus it produced upon him an extraordinary effect. Hardly any other incident in his whole ministry affected him so profoundly as this. Instantly he exclaimed, "The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified." What bearing has this on the request of the Greeks, what is the psychology of this strange answer? These Greeks were suggestive. To the common mind they would have been only a few strange-looking foreigners, but to the prophetic imagination of Jesus they were radiant with significance and opened a wonderful vision of glory. These Greeks were Gentiles, heathen from the great world outside of the chosen people. They represented this world at its best, its most brilliant and cultured race. What were these Greeks but the forerunners of a great multitude that was to come to Christ out of that world from the east and from the west and from the north and from the south, the first-fruits of a vast harvest that was to be gathered in every clime? A single drop of rain that comes splashing down on the hot, dusty earth may seem insignificant in itself, but it derives immense significance from the fact that it is the first drop of a copious shower that will saturate the thirsty ground and gladden every living thing. The first tiny green blade that pushes up through the clods of the wheat-field rejoices the heart of the farmer because he

sees that it is the pioneer of a million other blades that will shoot up through the pores of that field and presently cover it with golden grain. A few things are not few when they are the forerunners of many things. Jesus rejoiced in these inquiring Greeks because he saw that they were the budding of that prophecy that pledged him the heathen for his inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. With prophetic vision he saw himself in possession of this inheritance, and out of this exultant consciousness he exclaimed, "The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified." We need such faith that in small seeds we may see the promise and potency of great harvests, from small beginnings know that we may reach great attainments, from the present Church know that it is our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom.

2. Suddenly this joyous consciousness of Jesus changed and swept into a shadow. The painful thought came to him that except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit. He saw the cost of the great victory which had just filled him with a sense of triumph. How was he to gain the world? He knew that he was already rejected by the Jews. Might he not go with these inquiring Greeks out into the Gentile world and try his fortunes there? Might not the intellectual Greeks, so reasonable and so religious, give him a readier reception? Might not his journey through the Gentile world be a march of triumph that would bring the nations into his kingdom? Did any such perilous thought beat against his mind and heart at this hour? Did the devil again offer him all the kingdoms of this world if he would forsake the way of the cross? Certain it is that he cast any such alluring vision down, as he did on the mountain of temptation in the wilderness. Jesus clearly saw that not

by thus saving his life could he save the world, but only by losing it. The grain of wheat with all its wealth of nourishment and golden beauty must be buried in a grave and perish that it may shoot up into a green stalk and blossom and multiply itself a hundredfold. Nature is full of such sacrifice. Life always costs life. The weak must suffer for the strong, the strong must suffer for the weak, and the good must suffer for the bad. This principle reaches intense expression in our human world. This is the meaning of motherhood. The parent must suffer sacrifice for the child, and one generation for the next. Our liberties are the costly victories of many battle-fields. All our inherited blessings are the transmuted blood of countless ancestors who suffered and died for us. If no more grains fell into the ground there would be no more sheaves of wheat; and if there were no more lives laid down for others in this world there would be no more harvests of human welfare, no more children and no more saints. This principle reaches incomparably its highest expression in the cross of Christ. He who was infinitely the richest and most precious Seed that this world ever saw had to fall and perish in that hard soil of Judea that he might spring up in abundant life and beauty all over the world. Had Jesus forsaken the cross and gone with those Greeks in the hope of winning the world without sacrifice, we would never have heard his name. That grain of wheat would have been saved, but it would have abode alone and never would have sent its harvest down to us. But because Jesus fell from his cross into his grave, his Life is now springing up in our life and is everywhere enriching the world.

3. The same law applies to our lives. "He that loveth his life," continued Jesus, "loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

If any man serve me, let him follow me." That cross on Calvary was not absolutely unique: it is set up in every worthy life. Jesus himself says so. No true human life can escape this principle of sacrifice. If one sets about saving his life, guarding it from the wear and tear of service, wrapping it in robes of comfort and ease, his cancerous selfishness will eat into his soul and presently he will be empty of good and full only of misery. Terrible is the harvest of retribution that a life that is lived only for itself at last reaps. But he whose soul is not a sponge that sucks everything into itself, but a fountain that flings itself out in every direction, he who has a passion for serving others and seems so prodigal of his life that it might be thought he is careless of it and even hates it, shall have within him a well of water that is ever springing up into life more abundant and purer and sweeter. Great men who stand on pinnacles of honor prove this. They have grown great through service; they have sacrificed life and received life more abundant. The Christian must follow Christ along this path. No more than the Master can the disciple escape the cross and then wear the crown. More than anything else does this spirit of sacrifice bring us into affinity and fellowship with Christ. The way to see Jesus is to serve him.

4. Again the consciousness of Jesus passed into the shadow of temptation. There was that grim cross with its outstretched bloody arms standing before his vision, waiting to crush him in its fatal embrace: every moment was bearing him swiftly towards it. A dreadful alternative troubled his soul. What should he say in the presence of that cross? "Father, save me from this hour?" Was that the prayer he should offer? Let us again remember that the temptation of Jesus did not end in the wilderness. On that occasion "the devil departed from him for a season," and the season was not long.

The devil dogged the steps of Jesus through his whole ministry and was ever alert for some trying hour or unguarded moment in which he might catch him. Never was this temptation more persistent and powerful than at this crisis. Jesus felt the pressure of the suggestion to escape the cross and for a moment reeled under it. Let us never imagine that this, or any other, temptation of Jesus was fictitious and theatrical and had in it no element of peril: it was a real fight. Staggered with the evil thought, what did Jesus do? Instantly he recovered and stayed himself with the thought: "But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." Had not all his human life and all his divine purpose even from before the foundation of the world headed towards this cross, and would he now dash all his work down into ruin by one fatal false act? No, his consciousness filled and swelled with the thought that for that cause he had come unto that hour, and then he prayed, "Father, glorify thy name." With that thought and prayer the victory was won. Again the devil was defeated and beaten back into the infinite darkness whence he came. When we are tried and tempted in the hour of duty, what stronger and surer support is there for us than the thought that God has brought to us that hour for the sake of that duty? Then let us stand true to that duty, and pray the Father to glorify his name in us by strengthening us to do his will.

5. As the angels ministered to the victorious Christ in the wilderness, so in this hour of victory a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." The prayer of the tempted Christ was answered, and the Father will not be less faithful to all his tempted children. A curious diversity of interpretation was given to the voice. Some said it thundered; others, that an angel had spoken; but Jesus knew it was

the voice of the Father: three grades of interpretation corresponding to three degrees of spiritual susceptibility. It is always so among men. The same sounds to one ear are only noise and to another are strains of sweetest music. The same poem that is only meaningless words to a dull mind creates a fairy vision of beauty in an imaginative soul. The same voice of prayer that falls as an empty sound upon a worldly mind comes as a message of tender comfort and holy aspiration to the worshipful heart. The same universe that to the agnostic materialist is only a mass of dead matter forever sealed in an iron coffin, to the theistic thinker is tremulous with life and but thinly veils the Father's face. Let us seek and cultivate such spiritual susceptibility of soul that where, amid all the messages and the noisy confusion of this world, some hear only thunder and others suspect that angels speak, we may hear our Father's voice.

## XLII

### THE LORD'S SUPPER

And on the first day of unleavened bread, when they sacrificed the passover, his disciples say unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and make ready that thou mayest eat the passover? And he sendeth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him; and wheresoever he shall enter in, say to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is my guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he will himself shew you a large upper room furnished *and* ready: and there make ready for us. And the disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover. And when it was evening he cometh with the twelve. And as they sat and were eating, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you shall betray me, *even* he that eateth with me. They began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? And he said unto them, *It is* one of the twelve, he that dippeth with me in the dish. For the Son of man goeth, even as it is written of him: but woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had not been born. And as they were eating, he took bread, and when he had blessed, he brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take ye: this is my body. And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many. Verily I say unto you, I will no more drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God. And when they had sung a hymn, they went out unto the mount of Olives.—*Mark 14: 12-26.*

“According to thy gracious word,  
In meek humility,  
This will I do, my dying Lord,  
I will remember thee.”

**T**UESDAY of Passion Week, the last day of Christ's public ministry, was followed by a day of silence and rest in Bethany. It was the lull before the storm. The conspiracy of death was gather-

ing its malignancy and marshalling its forces for a final and fatal outburst of fury. Jesus knew what was coming. The cross was no surprise to him and did not cause him to falter a single step. Calmly he rested and gathered strength for the supreme trial. His work was done and he was ready to be offered. On Thursday afternoon the preparation for the Passover was made, and on Thursday evening, which according to the Jewish reckoning was the beginning of Friday, the Passover was eaten and the Lord's Supper was instituted.

1. The preparation for the ordinance is instructive. On the first day of unleavened bread (Ex. 12:18-20) the disciples asked Jesus where he would have them prepare the Passover. Jesus kept the ordinances of the church down to the very day of his death. Though this ordinance had fulfilled its purpose and was about to pass, yet he honored it in its last moments. Ordinances are the body in which the spirit of religion is incarnated, and we are not likely to have the spirit if we cast off the body. Those that reject or neglect the ordinances of worship cannot quote the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus gave a singular reply to this inquiry. He sent Peter and John to find the place in Jerusalem, yet did not tell them definitely where it was, but told them a man bearing a pitcher of water would meet them and they were to follow him. Jesus may have made such an arrangement with a friend, and there were doubtless reasons for this course, such as need of caution and secrecy. The incident is a beautiful illustration of the method of divine guidance. Jesus did not reveal to the disciples their path to the end of their journey, but gave them directions for part of the way up to a point where they would receive further instruction and guidance. Their path was partly revealed and partly concealed, and it was only by following up what they did know that they could find out what

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they did not know and thus reach their destination. This is always the method of providence. We can ever see our path before us for only a little distance and then it is lost to our view. But when we go as far as we can see, some sign-board of providence indicates the course we are to follow, and thus we are ever led onward. God always has a man bearing a pitcher of water waiting to show us the way. The secret of finding our way consists in following the path of duty as far as it lies revealed. Obedience to-day will open the way to-morrow. We do not know where this "upper room" was which the disciples found: the birthplaces of great events are often lost in oblivion. But in this humble room occurred one of the greatest events of history. From this unknown chamber issued a stream of blessing that has flowed down through all the ages and will continue to bless the world "till he come."

2. In the evening the little company gathered in the appointed place and the Passover meal began. As they were eating the disciples were startled by the sudden declaration of Jesus, "Verily I say unto you, One of you shall betray me." The unexpected announcement filled the disciples with alarm. Such baseness excited their horror. Could it be possible there was such treachery lurking amongst them? And they began to say, one by one, "Is it I?" The form of their question was good. They did not point the finger of suspicion at one another and say, "Is it you? Is it possible you can be so treacherous and base?" but, "Is it I? Is this baseness lying coiled up in my heart?" This was true self-examination and was their best safeguard. Our first impulse often is to think others worse than ourselves, and we impute to them evil that we never suspect may be in our own hearts. But the thought that should first strike us and most deeply concern us is, "Is it I?" There are hidden

possibilities of evil in us of which we may be seldom or never conscious. And there are moments, as when a great crime has been committed, or when temptation suddenly assails us, in which we are revealed to ourselves as by a flash of lightning and get glimpses into the undreamed-of and frightful depths of evil in our hearts that fill us with alarm and horror. Then we know that we in our supposed immaculate virtue and boasted strength are never safe. We need to keep in close acquaintance with our hearts and never assume that we may not be guilty of the deepest sin. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. Search me, O God, and see if there be any wicked way in me. The disciples wanted to know the guilty one, but Jesus left the point in uncertainty that all might be warned. Then he uttered a deep mystery of divine providence. "The Son of man goeth, even as it is written of him: but woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed!" Divine sovereignty and human responsibility are here strangely interlinked. Jesus "was delivered up to die by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," and yet man was held responsible for his death. God's plan is wide enough to include our most wicked acts, and yet it leaves our free agency and responsibility untouched. No man can roll his sin off on God's foreordination. Though it has been "written" in the counsel of eternity, yet it is his own sin, and, continuing impenitent, it were good for him if he had never been born.

3. "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread." The Lord's Supper was not an abrupt creation, but a further evolution. The new ordinance grew out of the old and was the fulfillment and perfect blossom of the past. Jesus came not to destroy but to fulfill, and Christianity is not a new faith, but the final outgrowth and fruitage of the old faith. These few simple verses are one of the

most deeply significant and sacred passages of Scripture. Here we are on holy ground and our meditations should be pervaded with tender reverence. The emblems and ordinance are rich in ideas. The great central idea is sacrifice. The cross has a blood-red heart. The broken bread represents the broken body, and the poured-out cup the shed blood of Christ. The scarlet thread of sacrifice is woven into the whole web of the universe. The very limestone rock on which the Cross stood was composed of the tiny bones of countless myriads of animals that gave up life that that Cross might stand. The wheat is broken and ground up that it may impart its life to higher life. The mother lays her life on the altar of sacrifice for her child, and the father will sacrifice much, even life itself, for his wandering boy. These are but drops of sacrifice from the heart of God. The supreme instance of sacrifice is the Cross of Calvary, on which the Father offered his Son and the Son freely gave himself. This is an offering, the lamb slain from the foundation of the world, that has virtue to atone for the guilt of sin and to cleanse away its vileness. Another great idea in this ordinance is that of food for the soul. The bread passes into the blood and is assimilated into tissue and reappears in the strength and beauty of the body. But man cannot live by bread alone. The soul has its hunger and must have bread or die. Christ is this bread of life that cometh down from heaven. He satisfies all our spiritual needs and gives us life everlasting. His Spirit passes into our hearts and is assimilated into our spirits and reappears in the strength and fruitfulness and beauty of our lives. Another prominent idea in this ordinance is fellowship. It is the "communion" of the Lord's Supper, communion with him and communion with one another. "We, being many, are one bread and one body." Here all divisive lines converge and melt into the unity of the

Spirit and the bond of peace. The world over, eating bread together is a sign of fellowship, and when we receive this bread we hereby proclaim that we are no more strangers and enemies, but brethren and children in the household of God. The closer we get to Christ the closer we are to one another, as all the radii of a circle converge and touch as they approach the centre. These and many other truths are expressed by this bread and cup. The outward emblems are simple and unadorned, but the inner meaning is deep and rich. The significance of any sign is not to be measured by the nature of the sign itself. The flag of our country is only so much silk or muslin, and yet what mighty meaning does it carry with it wherever it floats, representing the law and order, the power and majesty, the history and glory of a great nation. A little lock of hair carefully preserved, a little old shoe well worn at heel and toe, may seem to the careless eye of another to be of slight significance, but to the bereaved mother they suggest thoughts and memories that are too deep for tears. So this bread and cup may seem common and insignificant to the world, but to the believer they are precious, suggesting thoughts and memories and hopes that the world cannot give or take away.

4. The ordinance also has in it a gleam of prophecy. It looks back upon the past in remembrance, but it also looks out upon the future, "till he come" in that day when Christ will "drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." It thus links Christ's first with his second coming. How slender and frail seems the thread and yet how long it has lasted and will last. How perishable are the elements and yet how imperishable is the memorial! It is one of the oldest things in the world and will yet outlast all the fabrics of human hands. It must have in it some substance and vitality that cannot die. It has deep, rich roots, but it has not yet come to

its perfect blossom and ripe fruit. Full of meaning as is its retrospect, fuller still is its prospect. These symbols are also shadows of things to come which eye hath not seen and ear hath not heard. If we could discern the real meaning of this bread and cup, these common elements would shine with the splendor of the celestial banquet house, and as we received them there would float in upon us the song of Moses and the Lamb. Christianity is a religion of hope. Every time we receive this ordinance we are bidden to cherish the hope of "some sweet day" when our Lord will come and take us home. "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out unto the Mount of Olives." Having instituted and partaken of such an ordinance it was fitting that they should sing. Right under the shadow of the Cross, Jesus planted a song blossom. He joined in this hymn himself and then went straight to his passion. If we are united in fellowship with him, we can sing hymns of faith and praise, and then go forth to do our work and bear our cross; for he will preserve us in trouble and compass us about with songs of deliverance.

## XLIII

### SERVANT OF ALL

Now before the feast of the passover, Jesus knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came forth from God, and goeth unto God, riseth from supper, and layeth aside his garments; and he took a towel, and girded himself. Then he poureth water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. So he cometh to Simon Peter. He saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt understand hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew him that should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. So when he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and sat down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me, Master, and, Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, A servant is not greater than his lord; neither one that is sent greater than he that sent him.—*John 13: 1-17.*

AS they were sitting down at the Passover occurred the unseemly strife among the disciples as to who should be greatest, followed by the condescension of Jesus in washing their feet. Selfishness pushed its ugly presence into this holy hour, and our best moments are often marred with evil suggestion.

1. Jesus sat down at this feast knowing that his hour was come. Upon that table fell the shadow of the cross and Jesus knew its terrible meaning. He was not laboring under any illusion or delusion and walking blindly through the world, but he clearly saw his path running straight to crucifixion. Yet beyond the outstretched arms of the cross he saw the outstretched arms of the Father. He knew that he was going out of the world, but he also knew whither he was going. The grave to him was not a black finality that punctuated life with a pit, but it was a gateway into a larger and lovelier world beyond. Well may we be willing to depart out of this world when we know that we go unto the Father. At this solemn crisis in his life Jesus loved his own that were in the world. The gathering shadows of his own death could not deflect his thought and love from his chosen disciples. He was about to go, but they were to remain, and he thought, not of himself, but of them. He not only loved them then, but he loved them unto the end. His love was not fluctuating and fickle, subject to circumstance and change, as human love so often is, but it had deep divine roots that never could be shaken. These men had grown into his love and life, and he never could let them go. Through all the stress and storm of suffering and death that came upon him, he loved them to the end. In this changeful passing world the heart craves love that will last, and, once our lives are hid in him, nothing shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2. Into this holy sacramental feast crept an evil purpose so wicked that it was inspired by the devil himself. Judas Iscariot resolved to betray him. Though the purpose was born of Satanic suggestion in his heart, yet it was none the less his own, and he must ever bear its fearful burden of guilt and shame. Another evil also

marred the peace and beauty of this feast. The disciples wrangled and quarrelled among themselves which should be the greatest (Luke 22: 24). In the midst of all this wicked treachery and unseemly strife, what was the state of mind of Jesus? We are here given a wonderful glimpse into his self-consciousness. At this moment he knew three things. First, he knew that the Father had given all things into his hands: he was conscious of his power; he felt his infinite resources; he knew what he could do. One of the first things we need to know is what powers are in us and what work has been committed to us, what things we are to lay hold of and what things we are to leave alone because they have not been given into our hands. Next, Jesus knew that he was come from God: he was conscious of his divine sonship; he knew who his Father was, and was not a waif in the world. What we believe about our origin and worth is a vital point in our estimate of self. If we believe that we are only beasts of finer clay and richer blood, we shall presently live as beasts, and what we shall eat and drink will be the main question with us. But if we know that we have come from God and are his sons, we may cherish our personal worth and not trail its glory in the dust. And, again, knowing that he had come from God, Jesus also knew that he was going back to God. In his Father's house were many mansions and that was his destination. Through all that long and weary walk through temptation and trial towards the cross he ever saw beyond the darkness of this world the twinkling of the light in his Father's house, and knew that he was going home. Jesus knowing that he was come from God and went to God—these were the two towers from which swung the cables that sustained his life and the awful weight of his cross. Across that bridge of sorrows he walked in strength and

calmness and peace, because if he looked backward he saw that he was come from God, and if he looked forward he saw that he was going to God. These were the thoughts that filled the mind of Jesus while all were plotting and wrangling about him. His consciousness of his oneness with the Father was raised to its highest pitch of intensity. He stood upon the summit of his divinity, close to the Father with heaven bending just over him, and his sense of his divine sonship flowing through him in a rich and glorious stream of life.

3. What action resulted from this marvellously rich and inspiring self-consciousness in Jesus? What is the completion of this wonderful sentence in the Gospel? "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came forth from God, and goeth unto God": we expect some wonderful ending to that sentence, some splendid and worthy action to flow from this consciousness. A root so deeply buried in the life of God will surely bloom into some matchless blossom; a rocket that has shot up so high will certainly explode in a shower of stars and spangle the sky with many-colored splendors. Doubtless if we were to try our hand at completing this sentence we would piece it out with some tawdry rhetoric and spectacular action. But give the pen to John and let him write the truth. "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came forth from God, and goeth unto God, . . . took a towel and girded himself . . . and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel." Was there ever a greater anti-climax, a deeper fall, a more ridiculous conclusion? Jesus with this rich and splendid stream of life flowing through him did no great and worthy thing at all, but simply took a towel and actually began to wash his disciples' feet! Shall all this divine endowment and supreme power in

its most vivid moment be turned to no more dignified and worthy end than seizing a towel and performing the service of a slave? Can it be possible that this is so? Yes, it is possible and this is verily so. This sentence has upon it all the marks of truth, it would be out of place in any other book, a misfit in any other life, but it is in just the right place in the Gospel and exactly fits the life of Jesus. This is just a piece out of the life of him, who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant. All that infinite endowment of divine sonship which the Father had given into his hands he used, not for personal comfort and aggrandizement, but for the service of others. And it is beautiful to see what that service was on this occasion. On other occasions he used his endowment in feeding the hungry and forgiving the penitent and speaking immortal words of life. At last he laid it down as a sacrifice upon the cross. But on this occasion he used it in washing his disciples' feet that he might cleanse and cool them from the dust and heat. It was a small and humble service, but it added somewhat to the comfort of others and it taught a great lesson. And so this sentence, that seems to end in a vanishing point of triviality, after all ends in a blossom of beauty richer than any thought of ours, in an explosion of splendor more fitting and brilliant than any little fireworks that we could supply.

4. As Jesus passed around the circle of the disciples washing their feet, he came to Peter, and this impulsive disciple gave a characteristic exhibition of himself. Very likely a sense of shame came over him that he had not rendered this service himself and had thus allowed the Master to come to him in this capacity. He therefore first essayed to stop Jesus with an inquiry that raised the question of fitness and right. Jesus gave an answer of

wonderful dignity and depth, reaching far beyond the incident of that hour into all the plans and perplexities of his providence. We must not expect to understand all that the Lord Jesus does at this time: the future will explain many of his ways that we cannot now understand. Peter then blurted out, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Jesus calmly answered, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Instantly Peter swung to the opposite extreme and cried, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and head." Again the Master met him with a quiet word of rebuke. Peter's motives were good, but he was still swayed by self-will and had not yet learned simply to take Jesus at his word and do his will. Christ needs not to give account of himself to us, or to receive advice from us, but we need only to know his will and follow in his way.

5. Having passed around the circle, Jesus sat down and said, "I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done." The disciples themselves, in one of their number, should have performed this humble service, but they were too full of strife to be in any such mood. Jesus, without taking any notice of their unseemly quarrel, had himself first performed the service, and then he talked to them in tender and beautiful words of the obligation and blessedness of such ministry. We utterly miss the purpose and power of God's gift to us if we do not employ it in service. And let us not be too particular about the kind of work we are to do. We are often seeking what we are pleased to consider important service, conspicuous and easy work. But Jesus in the moment of his supremest and richest self-consciousness took a towel and washed his disciples' feet; and we are never more like him than when we are hitching our most splendid powers to the lowliest service. Any act that will add to the cleanliness and coolness and

comfort of people is washing their feet and is work for us to do. We do not need to go far to find such service, for it lies all around us and waits for us. Our religious consciousness in its highest and most blessed moments of worship is not complete until it flows out into some act of service that will bless and beautify the world.

## XLIV

### GETHSEMANE

And they came unto a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith unto his disciples, Sit ye here, while I pray. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly amazed, and sore troubled. And he saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death: abide ye here, and watch. And he went forwards a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass away from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me: howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt. And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest thou not watch one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. And again he went away, and prayed, saying the same words. And again he came, and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they wist not what to answer him. And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough; the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us be going: behold, he that betrayeth me is at hand.—*Mark 14: 32-42.*

“ Into the woods my Master went,  
Clean forspent, forspent;  
Into the woods my Master came,  
Forspent with love and shame.  
But the olives they were not blind to him,  
The little gray leaves were kind to him,  
The thorn-tree had a mind to him,  
When into the woods he came.”

—*Sidney Lanier.*

AFTER the closing hymn of the Lord's supper, Jesus and the disciples near the hour of midnight went out of the city across the Kedron to the garden of Gethsemane, on the western slope of the Mount of Olives. This garden was the real battle-field

of the Cross. Gethsemane won the victory of Calvary. Out of this agony Jesus stepped calm and strong for the final hour. We must win our battles before we come to them in secret prayer and gathered strength.

1. They came to Gethsemane. The name means "the oil press," and was an orchard of olive trees such as is found there to-day. It was a place of frequent resort with Jesus and the disciples (John 18: 2), and may have belonged to some friend. The name is deeply significant and always touches a chord of sorrow in our hearts. Every life has its Gethsemane. At the entrance to the garden Jesus left eight of the disciples and with the other three went on to engage in prayer. Prayer was his preparation for his Passion. He wanted to see full and clear the light of his Father's face before he stepped into the final darkness. He sought to fall into perfect submission to the will of God and feel the assuring, sustaining power of Omnipotence: he knew that he could then bear the Cross. Prayer is the highest preparation for every duty and burden. It quiets the soul and clears its vision so that it can see the path of truth and duty. It is when the lake lies still that it reflects heaven's blue; it is when the soul lies still before God in communion that it catches and reflects his mind. Prayer presses into the secret place of the Most High and there makes discoveries no penetration of reason could ever find; there also it gathers strength for service and sacrifice; it lays hold of God, and then it is ready to lay hold of any work and bear the strain of any burden. In entering any Gethsemane, let us enter through the door of prayer, and then we can endure the agony, and we may be able to come out calm and strong.

2. "And he taketh with him Peter and James and John." The three witnesses of the Transfiguration were also witnesses of the agony of Gethsemane. They saw

Jesus on the mountain-top, transfigured with glory, and they saw him down in the valley, bowed under sorrow and bloody with sweat: by such scenes were they fitted to be witnesses of him. It was James and John who, in asking to sit on the throne with Jesus, had said that they were able to drink of the same cup that he would drink. Here they saw what that cup was, and they did drink of it, as every disciple must. Why did Jesus, leaving the other eight disciples behind, take these three with him? Partly as an inner guard against interruption, but mainly for the sympathy and support of their presence. They were the inner circle of disciples that understood him best and that he trusted most. It was a beautiful and pathetic exhibition of the humanity of Jesus that in his hour of trial he wanted his dearest friends near by. Their simple presence helped to support and comfort him; their shoulders were under his burden; he was so much stronger by reason of their added strength. Sympathy is a wonderful power to lighten burden. Solitary suffering is doubly hard to bear. It gives us a sense of unsupported and forsaken loneliness that kills all courage and fills us with despair. The presence of a friend rallies our energies and inspires us with new life. There are many lonely, burdened hearts in the great Gethsemene of this world, and, as opportunity offers, we ought to support and comfort them. It was the simple presence of these chosen disciples that Jesus wanted: not their talk. There was nothing they could say to him that would help him: but their watchful waiting near by would help him. The best sympathy is not that which is most talkative and fussy: the silent presence, the sympathetic tear, the thoughtful, helpful act, these go deeper. There are chambers of sorrow in which voluble speech is an impertinence. The friends of Job in his affliction sat down with him "seven days and seven nights, and none

spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great." What delicate and beautiful sympathy was that, and how strong and comforting it was. These friends of Jesus were near to him in his sorrow, but they were still separated from him by an interval. At last he had to tread the wine-press alone. We can go with others part way in their sorrow, but there is a point beyond which we cannot go. However close others may come to us, they are still separated from us, and every one must bear his own burden.

3. When Jesus and the three disciples were buried deep in the seclusion and shadows of the garden, a mysterious dread as the horror of a great darkness came upon him and he began to be greatly amazed and sore troubled and said unto them, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." What was this terrible storm that broke upon the sinless Christ? "It was something far deadlier than death. It was the burden and the mystery of the world's sin which lay heavy on his heart; it was the tasting, in the divine humanity of a sinless life, the bitter cup which sin had poisoned; it was the bowing of Godhead to endure a stroke to which man's apostasy had lent such frightful possibilities. It was the sense, too, of how virulent, how frightful, must have been the force of evil in the Universe of God which could render necessary so infinite a sacrifice. It was the endurance, by the perfectly guiltless, of the worst malice which human hatred could devise; it was to experience in the bosom of perfect innocence and perfect love, all that was detestable in human ingratitude, all that was pestilent in human hypocrisy, all that was cruel in human rage. It was to brave the last triumph of Satanic spite and fury, uniting against his lonely head all the flaming arrows of Jewish falsity and heathen corruption—the concentrated wrath of the rich and respectable, the yellow fury of the

blind and brutal mob. It was to feel that no wish, to whom he came, loved darkness rather than light—that the race of the chosen people could be wholly absorbed in one insane repulsion against infinite goodness and purity and love.”<sup>1</sup> We cannot enter into all the elements of this anguish, for it involves roots and relations that stretch infinitely beyond our understanding and experience ; it is a burden of mystery of which our minds can only touch the edge. This was the agony that forced from the sensitive, quivering frame of Jesus great drops of blood. This was the cost of our redemption. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.

4. Out of this garden has floated one of the most wonderful prayers in the Word of God; out of this darkness and agony came strong trust and sweet submission. “Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me: howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt.” Abba, the Aramaic word for Father, is one of the very few literal words of Jesus that have come down to us. “Father” must ever be the first word of our prayer; we cannot pray to an “Unknowable Power,” or infinite What is it? “All things are possible unto thee” is the strong ground of confidence the prayer first lays down. Prayer has no meaning unless it first puts God on the throne. If his power and providence were limited, he would be impotent to respond to our appeals. Faith asserts the sovereignty of God and commits all things to his hands. Yet the power of God is not unbridled and arbitrary, but is controlled by his truth and justice and love. There are some things that God cannot do: he cannot lie; he cannot violate his own holy nature. These limitations, however, are not imposed upon him from without, but spring from within and are the expression of his own character and will. God can

<sup>1</sup> Farrar’s Life of Christ, Vol. II, 314.

do all things that he wants to do. "Remove this cup from me:" what a pathetic cry is this; how human it is! The cup of the Cross was already becoming so bitter that Jesus drew back from it in horror and instinctively prayed that it might pass. The humanity of the Son of God is here laid bare down to its shrinking, quivering nerves. As he looked full at the Cross, for a moment his courage wavered and his faith paused. This was not human sinfulness, but only that human shrinking which is one of the safeguards of our life. It is right for us to pray that the cup of trouble may pass. All the saints have cried to God in their Gethsemane, "Deliver me out of all tribulation." "Howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt." This was the strong, sure check that Jesus put upon his own will, the invulnerable safeguard that he threw around himself against unholy desires and mistaken, forbidden petitions, the mighty rock on which he kneeled. He would have his human desire accepted and fulfilled only in so far as it coincided with the divine will. This is the grand condition and safeguard of prayer; this bends the most stubborn desire and brings the most foolish petition into harmony with the will of God; this calms the troubled heart into submission and fills it with peace. With this spirit in our hearts, we may ask what we will: for the little circle of our will is thus enclosed in the great circle of God's will, and thus his will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven.

5. Three times he returned to the disciples and found them sleeping. He seems to have felt so dependent on their sympathy and support that he wanted to assure himself of their presence and watchfulness. On their part, the lateness of the hour, the silence of the place, the excitement and anxiety through which they had been passing, the great benumbing grief that was upon them, the drowsiness of sorrow, all combined to overpower

them with slumber. It was a human weakness which Jesus excused: "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Yet they were in some degree blame-worthy, and Jesus singled out Peter for a gentle rebuke. Their love for Jesus and his pathetic dependence upon them ought to have kept them awake and watchful. There are times when nothing can excuse unfaithfulness. Sentinels must not sleep. The mother, watching over her sick child when a moment's forgetfulness may prove fatal, dare not drowse. Life contains many such moments. When temptation is near, when duty is pressing, when Jesus needs us, we ought to be vigilant and faithful and, though the flesh is weak, the spirit ought to assert its mastery. Returning the third time, Jesus spoke in calm tones: "The hour is come." The victory was won. Through prayer his will had been wrought into absolute unquestioning coincidence with the Father's will, the peace of God was in him, the strength of God was upon him, and he was now ready to be offered. With calm courage that feared no evil, with masterful faith that scattered the darkness of Calvary, he said, "Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand."

## XLV

### THE TRIAL OF JESUS

They lead Jesus therefore from Caiaphas into the palace: and it was early; and they themselves entered not into the palace, that they might not be defiled, but might eat the passover. Pilate therefore went out unto them, and saith, What accusation bring ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, If this man were not an evil-doer, we should not have delivered him up unto thee. Pilate therefore said unto them, Take him yourselves, and judge him according to your law. The Jews said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death: that the word of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying by what manner of death he should die. Pilate therefore entered again in the palace, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered, Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee concerning me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priest delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end have I been born, and to this end I am come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find no crime in him. But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews? They cried out therefore again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.—*John 18: 28-40.*

**T**HE trial of Jesus is a complicated story that falls into six parts: three ecclesiastical and three civil. He was first taken before Annas, then before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin in an irregular trial at night, and then again before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin in a

regular trial in the morning. He was then taken before Pilate, as the Sanhedrin could not finally pass sentence of death. Pilate, after hearing the case, sent it to Herod, tetrarch of Galilee, then present in the city, on the ground that Jesus was a Galilean. Herod returned the case to Pilate, who then passed the final sentence of death.

After his trial before the Sanhedrin Jesus was taken before Pilate. Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea with his capital at Cæsarea, but with his residence during the feasts up at Jerusalem, probably in Herod's palace. He was unscrupulous and corrupt, tyrannical and cruel, and exasperated the Jews into fanatical rebellion by repeated acts of sacrilege and violence. The most momentous event of his governorship, though perhaps to him one of the most trivial, was this trial. He doubtless looked on Jesus as a contemptible Jew, possessed of a harmless delusion, yet had it not been for his accidental association with that Jew we never would have heard of Pilate. He stepped into the presence of Jesus for a moment, as a mote floats into a sunbeam, and in that light he stands revealed forever. He showed some disposition to deal fairly with his prisoner and made some feeble attempts to release him, but in the end he played the part of an unjust judge and a coward, and "Suffered under Pontius Pilate" is the indelible stigma that has been affixed to his name.

1. When the Jews brought Jesus in the gray light of the morning to Pilate's judgment hall, they would not enter lest they should be defiled: for men may be intensely religious at one point while engaged in the deepest wickedness at another; especially may they be punctilious in the observance of petty points of ceremony while disregarding and trampling upon moral principles. Pilate therefore came out to them, and, having observed the prisoner, inquired, "What accusation bring ye against

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this man?" This was certainly an important point in the case, and yet the Jews not only had failed to supply it, but were indefinite and evasive when called upon for it. "If this man were not an evil-doer," they said, "we should not have delivered him up unto thee." The charge on which they had condemned him before their own court was blasphemy, but they knew this would be of no weight with Pilate, and therefore they did not mention it and hoped that he would blindly condemn the prisoner at their instigation. But this was not in accordance with Pilate's Roman ideas of legal procedure; and, as they made no definite charges, he attempted to throw the case back into their hands by telling them to take the prisoner and judge him according to their own law. This was Pilate's first device to shift his own responsibility to get rid of Christ; and from this point on it is pitiful to see him tossed about in his indecision and cowardice, impaled now on one and now on another horn of the case, vainly trying to escape and yet driven on by the murderous mob to a fatal decision. They answered that it was not lawful for them to put any man to death, and thus let their secret out that they were bent on his death irrespective of his guilt or innocence. Jesus himself had foreshadowed his death by crucifixion (12: 32, 33), which could be inflicted only by the Roman power, and so these Jews were unwittingly fulfilling his prophecy.

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2. Pilate now saw that he must look into the case. He went back into the palace and called Jesus for a private interview. The Jews by this time had presented charges (Luke 23: 2) to the effect that Jesus was perverting the nation, forbidding to pay taxes to Cæsar, and declaring himself a king—charges that were false, but that they knew would be effective with Pilate. Pilate began the interview by inquiring into this point. "Art thou the King of the Jews?" "Sayest thou this of thyself, or did

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others tell it thee concerning me?" was the searching question with which Jesus replied. "Are you personally interested in knowing me, or are you merely repeating some report or rumor that you have caught from the crowd?" If the question came from within as an expression of personal interest, Jesus could do much more for the inquirer than if it came from without as a mere repetition of what others said. This question goes to the root of our religious life and stamps it as personal and vital, or as traditional and superficial. What we say of ourselves is knowledge at first-hand, belief for which we see the reason and proof, the product of our own mental operations, the result of our own experience, a conviction that cannot be shaken. What others tell us is knowledge at second-hand, report and rumor which we can repeat but not verify and defend, which we can preach but not practice. Much of our religion is traditional. We all get our religious faith in this way in the start, and many never get beyond this process. Their religion consists in what others have said, their fathers have taught and the Church has written in its creed, and it is thus largely on the outside and does not get inside and circulate in the blood. Their faith is not fused in their hearts and does not come out in a molten, white-hot stream of conviction and experience. "Sayest thou this of thyself?" No, somebody else told it to you. Then your faith is not first-hand, but second-hand. You are repeating your religion by rote. You know Christ only by report, you have heard of God only by rumor, and have not yet known whom you have believed.

3. This searching question drew from Pilate the contemptuous reply, "Am I a Jew?" With what a bitter sneer and scorn must he have uttered these words? By this exclamation he disclaimed all personal interest in the matter. He now asked Jesus what he had done. Jesus

sketched the outline of his kingdom: it was not of this world, and there was no sword behind it to bring it into collision with Rome. Pilate, catching again at the word king, repeated the inquiry, "Art thou a king then?" He did not look like a King as he stood there, a despised Galilean, humbly clad, so pale-faced and wan, with his visage cut deep and marred with lines of sorrow. He did not look like a King as he stood before the Roman judge, charged with a high crime, and eminent ministers and lawyers, his own countrymen, testifying against him, and a mob outside howling for his blood. Nobody thought him a King that day. The murderous mob did not think him a King; the Pharisees did not think him a King; neither did the high priest as he tore his scarlet robe and cried in a frenzy of rage, "What need we any further witnesses?" Pilate did not think the mysterious prisoner a King, though he did have some strange thoughts flashing through his mind. Even his own disciples, whatever they had thought, did not then think him a King, for they had forsaken him and fled. Nobody thought Jesus a King that day—except himself. He had an answer for this question no one else had: "Thou sayest that I am a king." Amidst all the inverted appearances and falsehood and hatred and outrageous treatment and violence of that hour, his consciousness of his royal birth and dignity and destiny was never dimmed or bordered with doubt. Crowned with thorns and spit upon, he yet felt in his hand an invisible sceptre and underneath him an everlasting throne. He saw through false appearances into realities and knew that he was a King forever and ever.

4. Pilate was puzzled and awed by the strange prisoner who was a King that would not fight and whose only weapon was truth. The mention of truth, however, struck a jarring note in his mind and drew from him the contemptuous exclamation, "What is truth?" This was

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the bitter sneer of a man of the world. He had lost all sense of the reality and value of truth. The only real things to him were money and position and power and pleasure, and truth no longer entered into his possessions and pursuits. The word was to him an empty sound, and he had small patience with a man that professed to found a kingdom on it. This is a state of scepticism into which the worldly mind often comes. Through being disregarded and sinned against, truth loses reality and becomes a ghostly shadow and then vanishes, leaving us in universal doubt and disgusted despair. Pilate, without waiting for reply to his question hurried out from the presence of Jesus and announced to the Jews, "I find no crime in him"—his first testimony to the innocence of the man whom he at last sent to his death. "But they were the more urgent, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, and beginning from Galilee, even unto this place." When Pilate heard he was a Galilean, he thought he saw a way out of the difficulty, and sent the prisoner to Herod, tetrarch of Galilee, who was then present in Jerusalem. This was the same Herod who had put John the Baptist to death, and he was glad to see Jesus, regarding him as a mere sleight-of-hand performer who might do some of his tricks and thus help him to while away an idle hour. Jesus treated the trifler with the contempt of silence. Herod and his soldiers then mocked the prisoner and arrayed him in gorgeous apparel and sent him back to Pilate (Luke 23: 5-16).

5. Thus Pilate, trying by every device to rid himself of the perplexing case, had the whole matter thrown back upon his hands. He again called the priests and rulers and people together and made to them a statement of the situation. They had brought unto him "this man" as one that perverteth the people: "and behold, I, having examined him before you, found no fault in this man

touching those things whereof ye accuse him: no, nor yet Herod: for he sent him back unto us; and behold, nothing worthy of death hath been done by him." This, then, was the outcome of Pilate's investigation. He had heard the charges of the Jews and had weighed the evidence they had presented: he had subjected Jesus to searching examination himself; he had sent the case to Herod and received his independent confirmation of his own judgment; and the result of it all was that he "found no fault in this man." This was the verdict this governor and judge, trained in Roman law, pronounced upon Jesus. High above the blasphemous charges and clamor of the fanatical priests and people rang, and still rings across all these centuries, the judicial voice of Pilate, "Behold, I, having examined him before you, found no fault in this man."

How much truer and juster and nobler at this point was the heathen governor than the Jewish priests? How often are pagan men better than professed Christians? "No fault in this man" is the crown that Pilate placed upon Christ, and nineteen centuries have not dimmed its splendor. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Many are the like remarkable testimonies to him, his enemies being judges. Strauss, the father of modern destructive criticism, said: "Jesus is the highest model of religion, and no perfect piety is possible without his presence in the heart." Fichte, the philosopher, said: "Till the end of time, all the sensible will bow before this Jesus of Nazareth." Familiar are the words of Rousseau: "If Socrates lived and died like a philosopher, Jesus lived and died like a God." John Stuart Mill confessed that the ethics of Jesus are unequalled, and Herbert Spencer affirms that his teachings are the ultimate morality. How comes it that this Jewish carpenter was able to teach the ultimate morality? Such testimonies as these coming from sceptics, agnostics, and ene-

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mies of Christianity, confirm the judgment of Pilate and are almost equivalent to saying, "Truly this was the Son of God." Those who deny him are yet found twining immortal garlands of praise for him. And if heathen men and unbelievers offer such testimony, what shall we say who believe in Jesus? We find in him no fault; only blessing, and wisdom, and honor, and power, and glory, forever and ever. Amen.

6. We might now expect some just and noble action from this Roman judge. Having become convinced of the innocence of the prisoner, will he not vindicate him? What says the record? "I will therefore chastise him, and release him." What an illogical and impotent conclusion was this, what a fall for this Roman judge! Pilate did not have the courage of his conviction, and stood timid and vacillating before the fanatical crowd. But the mob was in no mood to take to the feeble suggestion and cried out furiously against it. Then the shifty Pilate saw that some new device must be invented, and his fertile wit soon had one ready. It was the custom for the governor to release a prisoner chosen by the people at the feast. In the prison near by lay Barabbas, a notorious leader of insurrection and violence. The fierce light of this trial for a moment falls on him. His hands were bloody with murder, but he was regarded as a patriot and was popular with the rabble. Pilot thought he saw his chance. He would get the people to call for the release of Jesus. So he put to them the question, "Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?" (Matthew 27:17). But again Pilate miscalculated the cunning of the priests and the temper of the crowd. The priests were suspicious of Pilate and saw through his wily scheme. They were not to be outwitted by any such device and were instantly busy with the rabble, stirring up its fanaticism and passion; and in

response to Pilate's question the mob yelled back at him, "Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas." This is what comes of putting Jesus to vote: the majority is against him, the world has ever condemned him. It was a case in which there was more popular admiration for a dashing, bold, bad man, than for a quiet, innocent, good man; in which coarse, fleshly lusts overmastered pure, spiritual influences; in which men voted as wild beasts rather than as rational moral beings. It is a question whether the scales have yet turned. As between Jesus and Barabbas, Barabbas can still get the most votes. The crowd makes heroes out of violent leaders and unscrupulous demagogues, and even out of brutal pugilists. The carnal heart is yet master. We need only scratch our own Christian skin to find barbarous blood, and the beast in us still yells for Barabbas and not for Jesus.

7. Pilate, having been foiled in his sly scheme by the cunning of the priests, was now thrown into great perplexity as to what to do with Jesus. His embarrassment was intensified at this juncture by a message from his wife that he was to "have nothing to do with that righteous man," for she had been greatly troubled "in a dream because of him." Possibly she knew something about Jesus and sent this testimony to his innocence and warning to her husband. "What then shall I do unto Jesus which is called Christ?" was the weak and cowardly question with which he met the demand to release Barabbas. The priests and rabble now saw that Pilate was afraid of them, and then they had him in their power; henceforth the weak-willed governor floated helplessly on the torrent of their passion. In answer to this question for the first time arose the dreadful cry, "Crucify, crucify him!" Pilate quailed before the unexpected and terrible proposal, and exclaimed, "Why, what evil hath this man done?" He had done no evil

and Pilate knew it. O that he had only had the courage of his convictions. He was willing to pronounce Jesus innocent and to compliment him, but he was not willing to do the just and brave thing and release him. Many are willing to praise Jesus who are not willing to obey him. But praising him did not save Jesus; it did not save Pilate; and it will not save us. Christ does not want our compliments but our faith and service. The innocence of Jesus only stirred up the hatred of the mob, and the more furiously they yelled, Crucify him! This is what we are virtually saying when we refuse to obey him.

8. Pilate is now about to seal his own doom. Before doing this he tried to exonerate himself by a vain and foolish device. He took water and in the presence of the multitude washed his hands, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man: see ye to it." Yet by the very terms of this declaration his hands were dripping with the blood of the righteous man whom he was sending to his death, and not all the multitudinous seas could wash them clean. The people shouted back, "His blood be on us, and on our children,"—an ominous prophecy that is being fulfilled to this day. "And Pilate gave sentence that what they asked for should be done." So ended the trial of Jesus. Yet the case was not closed when Pilate delivered him to be crucified. This trial is still open, and every one of us must record his verdict. Very ancient history may be repeated by those that are little aware of doing this. Those who are outwardly separated in time and circumstances as widely as Pilate and ourselves may yet inwardly do the same thing. "What shall I do with Jesus?" is still the question we must answer, and no other decision we make goes so deep into life and so far out into eternity. Cast your vote on the right side. Be at peace with this holy Man.

Whosoever is spotted with the innocent blood of Christ has a future filled with sorrow. But whosoever is washed in this blood shall become white as snow and see God.

## XLVI

### THE CRUCIFIXION

And when they came unto the place which is called The skull, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left. And Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And parting his garments among them, they cast lots. And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also scoffed at him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if this is the Christ of God, his chosen. And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, offering him vinegar, and saying, If thou art the King of the Jews, save thyself. And there was also a superscription over him, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, Art not thou the Christ? save thyself and us. But the other answered, and rebuking him said, Dost thou not even fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said, Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom. And he said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise. And it was now about the sixth hour, and a darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, the sun's light failing: and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said this, he gave up the ghost.—*Luke 23:33-46.*

“Well might the sun in darkness hide,  
And shut his glories in.”

**F**ROM Pilate's hall Jesus was led away to the place of crucifixion. He was made to bear his own cross, but on the way an African Jew was compelled to share the burden. A company of women followed him, bewailing his fate, but Jesus bade them weep not for him, but for themselves. In all that throng he was the one man that did not need to weep. At last the procession reached

the place where the great tragedy was enacted. Here we have come to the loftiest summit in the story of redemption. Towards this point for centuries the lines of prophecy and providence converged, and from it ever since have issued streams of blessing that are everywhere making the world rejoice and blossom as the rose. The name of the place was Golgotha in Hebrew, Calvary in Latin. It was outside the north wall of the city on the Damascus road. The name, meaning a skull, was probably given to a small knoll in the shape of a skull and it was a significant name for the place of man's redemption. How eloquent of death is a skull! The delicate organs of sight and sound and speech that were so expressive of life are utterly gone, leaving only dark caverns staring blankly around; and the great golden bowl of the brain, once the seat of intelligence and affection and will, is empty forever. So is man in his sin. It was fitting, then, that the cross should be lifted at Golgotha, the place of a skull, emblem of man's condition, for it was to bear the guilt of sin and undo all its work. On that cross were to be nailed all the wounds and woes that have reduced man to a skull, and from it were to issue such virtue and power as would restore his shattered faculties and make him once more a living soul.

1. The soldiers that led Jesus to the place of crucifixion promptly dispatched the business. The mode of Christ's death had been shadowed forth for ages under a variety of types and figures. The brazen serpent signified that he was to be lifted up; the lamb upon the altar showed that he was to be helpless and dumb; the slaying of the lamb showed that his blood must be shed. His hands and his feet were to be pierced, he was to be wounded and tormented, his ears were to be filled with revilings, upon his vesture lots were to be cast, and vinegar was to be given him to drink. These numerous and

diverse requirements as to the Messiah's death had been foretold in Jewish prophecy. And now the Gentile world came forward with a mode of death that marvellously combined them all. An instrument of execution had been invented by the cruelty of the human heart that was the terror of the ancient world. The cross was only two beams of wood nailed together at right angles, but it was armed with almost preternatural power for inflicting suffering. The victim was first stripped quite naked and scourged with whips, into which had been woven bits of iron, until his flesh was all lacerated and bleeding. He was then laid upon the cross, his arms were stretched out upon the cross beam, and large iron spikes were ruthlessly driven through hands and feet into the solid wood behind. The cross, bearing its victim, was then raised upright and dropped into the hole dug for it with a violent jolt. Hanging on four great wounds, naked under a blazing sun, torn and bleeding, with wounds inflaming, thirst raging, every nerve quivering with pain, the sufferer endured the mortal agony for one, two, or even three days before death mercifully put an end to the scene. And through it all the soldiers and the rabble mocked and jeered and tormented the unhappy creature, even spitting upon him and brutally striking him as they passed by. This is what they did when "they crucified him." There by the holy city at the place of a skull, surrounded by enemies, cruelly tormented, with only a few women and a single disciple looking on from a distance in silent sympathy, Jesus hung upon the cross. All the horror of this death burst upon him in flames of agony so terrible that in a few hours his life was consumed. Yet no spot of guilt was upon him, no secret fault was in him, but he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.

2. The soldiers in charge of the crucifixion received the

garments of Jesus as their perquisites. Wholly unconscious that they were fulfilling ancient Jewish prophecy (Ps. 22: 18), they divided the outer garments into four parts, one for each soldier; and then, rattling dice in their brass helmets, they gambled for the inner garment which was woven without seam. Thus unwittingly do men even in their deepest wickedness fulfill far-off divine purposes. How little did these soldiers realize the overshadowing significance of that death while they were busy in getting a few shreds of this world's goods? Their eyes glittered with avarice as they watched the fall of the dice, but they were blind to the innocence and meekness and self-sacrifice of the Man on the cross. Their tongues were noisy with bargaining and with blasphemy, but they had no words of sympathy and praise for the strange Sufferer. Is it not even so among us to this day? In all our cities and towns in the very thick of their crowded streets and marts, churches and cathedrals lift their spires to heaven often crowned with the cross; within sight of this symbol of the crucified Christ men buy and sell and speculate and gamble and follow with the fiercest competition the pursuit of this world's goods: how often do they lift their eyes to that symbol and temper their bargaining and restrain their blaspheming with thoughts of that holy Man? How much of our living is but noisy worldliness and selfishness in the presence of Christ? Let the shadow of that cross ever fall upon our lives to quiet and constrain them into holy purpose and high endeavor.

3. On the top of the cross over the head of Jesus was a board whitened with gypsum, bearing in black letters the inscription, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Pilate wrote the inscription, doubtless as a deadly insult to the Jews, and when they saw it they were enraged and interceded with him to have it changed. But the Roman

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governor, having recovered some of his courage, met them with the refusal, "What I have written, I have written." Pilate wrote better than he knew. He may have had some dim consciousness of the moral greatness, if not of the supernatural nature, of Jesus and thus wrote. More likely, however, it was written as a jest and an insult: yet, like many another word spoken in ridicule, it has turned out to be one of the greatest truths of the world. It was written in three languages: the official Latin, the current Greek and the vernacular Aramaic—a fact which may explain the variations in the form of the inscription in the gospels. The writing of the inscription in three languages is a significant fact. Every one present could understand one of these tongues. The gospel is for all men of every race and tongue and nation, and it must be put into all languages that all may hear it and none may miss its meaning. The Latin was representative of power in the ancient world, the Greek of culture, and the Aramaic of the common people. Christ is King over all: he is mighty to rule over the strong; he has truth for the intellectual; and his sympathies are broad as humanity, and the common people hear him gladly. Two thieves were crucified with him, one on each side. This may have been intended as a further degradation of Jesus, but it only raised him to a higher exaltation. The thieves also joined in the blasphemy and railed at Jesus. But one of them repented and was saved and passed that day with Jesus into Paradise. One repented, and, therefore, there is hope of repentance in the dying hour; but only one repented, and, therefore, let none presume to run the risk. In this, again, men unintentionally wrought the purpose of God, Scripture was fulfilled, and he was numbered with the transgressors.

4. A furious mob raged like an angry sea around the cross. There were the preachers and elders of the church,

Sadducees in their silken robes, Roman soldiers in their scarlet cloaks, coarse people drawn by low curiosity, and the basest dregs from the slums of the city. These kept up a constant tumult of jeers and taunts and insults and violence against Jesus. A few of these taunts were caught up into the inspired gospels and have been wafted down to us. Like everything that was said in derision against Jesus, they add to his honor and are so many crowns upon his head. "He saved others; himself he cannot save." No grander eulogy could be pronounced even upon the Son of God. Unconsciously, they placed upon his brow his brightest crown. "He saved others:" this he did, whether they meant it in truth or in mockery. Many who had been healed of diseases, many who had been forgiven of sin, many who had been comforted in sorrow could have testified that "he saved others." An increasing multitude down through the centuries, the millions in the world to-day that have felt his healing power, and all the countless redeemed in heaven, stand ready to testify to the same blessed truth. "Himself he cannot save:" that was not true in the sense they meant. He could have saved his life as far as mere power was concerned: one flash of his omnipotence could have laid his enemies dead. But in a deeper sense this saying was true. Jesus could not save himself at the expense of his covenant with the Father and of his love for lost men. No imagination can picture the awful consequences if on that eventful day Jesus had simply saved himself. The Gospel would have perished on the spot, and the world would never have heard of the name of Christ. Let the earth reel and stagger along its track under its growing burden of sin until it becomes a huge festering mass of corruption and plunges into the depths of hell! Worse consequences would have resulted. The divine covenant with man would have been broken, a lie would have

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issued from the lips of the Eternal, the great white Throne would have been cracked and moved from its foundations, and the universe would have been thrown into eternal confusion. Thank God that Jesus did not save himself. Saving self is the curse of this world; saving others is its salvation.

5. Nature manifested mysterious sympathy with the scene. The sun hid its glories from the awful spectacle, and the earth quaked as though convulsed with mortal agony. These strange phenomena set the Cross in a grand cosmic framework and disclosed its universal relations. The outer darkness, however, was but a shadow of the deeper darkness that was gathering around the soul of Jesus. We cannot penetrate into the profound mystery of that moment when the Father's face seemed averted and the Son uttered the infinitely pathetic cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In that hour burdens were being borne, penalties were being paid, problems were being solved, that run far beyond the borders of our experience and conception. This gives us a faint hint of the cost of redemption. This saying of Jesus was misinterpreted by those that heard it, as so many of his sayings have been. He was misunderstood of men up to the very last, as he so often is to this day. It was now near three o'clock and life was about spent. Human nerves could endure the strain no longer. The last thread was about to snap. With a great cry of mortal agony he commended his spirit to the Father, his head fell forward and he was dead. With wicked hands they had crucified him. Was this only one more death among the innumerable deaths of earth? No, this Death is the Fountain of Life: from it flow streams of mercy and healing and power to save the world. It is the fullest revelation and proof of the great truths of the Gospel. In the presence of the Cross only can we know God;

how absolute is his justice and how great is his love. In the presence of the Cross only can we know man: how deep is his sin and how high is his worth. Only in its light can we read the full meaning of sin and death, of obedience and holiness. Only at its foot can we see how deep is hell and how high is heaven. The justice of God, the love of Christ, the worth of man, the sinfulness of earth, the holiness of heaven, all these were gloriously manifested when on that green hill far away the dear Lord was crucified.

## XLVII

### THE RESURRECTION

And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment. But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came unto the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, while they were perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel: and as they were affrighted, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying that the Son of man must be delivered up into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words, and returned from the tomb, and told all these things to the eleven, and to all the rest. Now they were Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the *mother* of James: and the other women with them told these things unto the apostles. And these words appeared in their sight as idle talk; and they disbelieved them. But Peter arose, and ran unto the tomb; and stooping and looking in, he seeth the linen cloths by themselves; and he departed to his home, wondering at that which was come to pass.—*Luke 24:1-12.*

“ O Christ, whose cross began to bloom  
With peaceful lilies long ago,  
More thick the Easter garlands glow  
Each year above thy empty tomb.”

—Tennyson.

AFTER the crucifixion the body of Jesus was prepared for burial by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus and laid in a new sepulchre hewn in the rock, and the grave was closed with a great stone and sealed. There it lay indistinguishable from all the dead of earth through Friday evening, Saturday and

Sunday morning. But there was a difference in that grave, and in the morning of the third day an event occurred that has transformed all succeeding centuries. The resurrection of Christ is the central column of the gospel on which it all rests. Throw this down, and the whole structure falls into ruins. Make this sure, and the whole gospel is established. No resurrection means no Christ, but a risen Jesus means a mighty Saviour. It is the splendor of the resurrection that scatters the darkness of the cross and kindles every page of the gospel with glory. No one saw Jesus rise, but many saw him risen. The gospel narratives pour around this event a blaze of light such as illuminates no other miracle in the Bible. Inspiration set it in its central place and buttressed it with many infallible proofs so that it cannot be shaken. Five different appearances of the risen Christ on the day of the resurrection are recorded: first, to Mary Magdalene early in the morning near the sepulchre; second, to the other women soon after in the same place; third, to Peter in the morning; fourth, to two disciples on the way to Emmaus in the afternoon; fifth, to the assembled disciples, except Thomas, in an upper room in Jerusalem in the evening. Six later appearances are recorded, making eleven in all.

I. The morning opens with the faithful women, who were last at the cross, first at the tomb. What were they doing there? They had bought spices and brought them to anoint the body of Jesus. This loving act has immense value as showing the state of mind of these women and of all the disciples after the crucifixion. They believed that Jesus was dead, and had no hope or thought of his resurrection. They were utterly bewildered, scattered and crushed, and supposed that all was over. They were in no condition of mind, then, to invent or imagine a resurrection, and any theory of fraud

or of vision on the part of the disciples is a psychological impossibility. This is incidental and undesigned, but strong, confirmation of the reality of this event. On their way to the sepulchre the woman had wondered how the stone that closed it could be removed, but when they reached it they found it rolled away. An earthquake had shaken it loose and left the rocky jaws of the tomb standing open for the risen Jesus to step through. When the women entered the tomb they "found not the body of the Lord Jesus." Other tombs are held dear because they hold precious dust, or they are famous and draw visitors from far lands because they contain the remains of genius, but this tomb derives its vast significance from the fact that it is empty. Other bodies are put in the grave and stay there, but this one could not be "cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd," but rose again. And because this tomb was found empty, other tombs at last shall be empty also.

2. The angels that thronged the earth at the birth of Jesus again appear at his resurrection. There are some things that human lips must not be permitted to tell: they must not announce the birth of Jesus or his resurrection from the dead. These messages are too momentous to be entrusted first to earthly messengers. Let a choir of shining angels from the gallery of the sky sing the glad tidings of the first Christmas morning, and on the first Easter morning let angels clothed in white enter the tomb of the risen Jesus and explain to the world why that tomb is empty. The women were affrighted, as men of the stoutest nerves would have been, but the angel cried out "Fear not;" and a little after Jesus himself greeted these women with the same assuring words. "Fear not," was the first note of the angel's song announcing the birth of Jesus, and this is the key-note of the gospel all the way through to the final shout in

heaven. Death terrorizes us, even an empty tomb frightens us, but the risen Jesus, standing on the other side of the grave, assures us that there is no harm in it and bids our troubled hearts be still. And because this message comes to us from the Son of God, glorified by his resurrection, it is enough to quiet our fears and give us peace. "Why seek ye the living (or the living One) among the dead?" said the angels. These women unwittingly classified the living Christ with the dead, and may not we do the same? When we think of him purely as a historical person we forget and miss his living presence; and the faith that reduces him to the level of humanity puts him back in the grave among the dead. Let us never think of Christ as dead or try to wrap him in the cerements of the grave, but always remember that he is alive forevermore. "He is not here, but is risen," was the triumphant reason given by the angel why that tomb was empty. What became of that body, if Jesus did not rise? The story of the resurrection soon threw the priests into a panic, and they could have produced the body, over which they had set their own guard, if it had been there. But the tomb was empty because its temporary occupant was risen. His resurrection was in accordance with his own prediction. "Remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee." "He is risen, even as he said." His death was no unforeseen calamity that fell upon him and cut short his work, but it was part of his purpose and was built into his plan from before the foundation of the world. The resurrection was the completion of this plan and was provided and foreseen from the beginning. He who could thus predict his own resurrection is to be trusted in all his promises, even when he declares, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live."

3. The women "remembered his words," and their faith in him had a new birth, the resurrection became a rock under their feet. That we should remember the words of the Lord Jesus is a Scripture admonition to which we should give constant heed. Forgetting his words lets us slip into doubt and discouragement, but holding on to his promises keeps us strong and steady in faith. The women "returned from the tomb, and told all these things to the eleven, and to all the rest." Having received the good news they immediately began to tell it to others. From the empty tomb of the risen Christ the first believers in his resurrection sped away to publish the wonderful tidings, and we, having received the news, must pass it on and keep it flying until it reaches the ends of the earth. The good news, however, encountered strange unbelief. "And these words appeared in their sight as idle talk; and they disbelieved them." Who were these first unbelievers in the resurrection? Jewish priests and Roman officers? No, but "the apostles." Peter and James and John and all of the eleven believed the story of these women was some hallucination of their excited minds, "idle talk," "the wild talk of the sick in delirium," as the Greek word means. Again we have here a strong incidental confirmation of the truthfulness of this narrative and of the reality of this event. An inventor of such a story would never have put into it the unbelief of these disciples in the resurrection, but would rather have represented them as enthusiastic believers in it from the beginning. The fact that they disbelieved it and scoffed at it shows that they had not thought of such an event and were in no state of mind to be deceived or easily persuaded. They stood out stoutly against it and were convinced and converted only by incontestable facts. Thomas held out for eight days and his unbelief collapsed only when he could thrust his

hands into the very wounds of Christ. So the unbelief of these disciples sets their conversion in the light of strong proof and confirms our faith.

4. Peter was one of the first disciples to discover the truth. He at first disbelieved the report as idle talk and, likely enough, was one of the loudest scoffers. But he did not rest in his unbelief. Presently his mind fell into a more sober mood, and then he began to think the matter was worth looking into. He is counted in with those that "disbelieved," "but Peter arose, and ran unto the tomb." This discloses in Peter an honest spirit of inquiry and investigation. He disbelieved, but he was willing to know the truth. He did not assume that there could be no resurrection and settle the case by a theory spun out of his own mind, but he set about finding the facts. And he did not go to consult with priests and officers who were hostile to Jesus and to a resurrection, but he started straight for that tomb. He was going to investigate this matter at its source and have a first-hand knowledge of it. In his impetuosity he ran, for if there was any truth in this report he wanted to know it quick. Doubts concerning the resurrection of Christ may sorely trouble us, and such doubts may not be blameworthy. But they become blameworthy when we rest in them and cherish them. There is a way out of them, and this way is the path that leads us straight to Christ. We must get closer to him and come into personal acquaintance with him, if we would know the truth in this matter. How did the case come out with Peter? "And stooping down and looking in, he seeth the linen cloths lying by themselves." Those grave-clothes were evidence to him that Jesus was indeed risen, and his unbelief now gave way to a mighty faith that mastered him to the end of his days. "And he departed to his home, wondering at that which was come to pass." This is what comes of

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honest investigation and looking the facts fairly in the face. Had Peter cherished his unbelief his first hastily formed impression might have hardened into prejudice and pride of opinion that never would have changed. But his visit to that tomb opened his eyes and showed him wondrous things that dissipated his doubt and filled his soul with glowing faith and love. A reverent study of the facts that we find in connection with the empty tomb of Jesus is a path out of doubt into faith. If we will candidly consider the mass and the momentum, the convergence and the convincingness, of the evidence for the resurrection of Christ, we shall surely be filled with wonder that will grow into worship.

## XLVIII

### MANY INFALLIBLE PROOFS

When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first *day of the week*, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you. And when he had said this, he showed unto them his hands and his side. The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord. Jesus therefore said to them again, Peace *be* unto you: as the Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained. But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace *be* unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and see my hands; and reach *hither* thy hand, and put it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed *are* they that have not seen, and *yet* have believed.—*John 20: 19-29.*

AFTER this day of sensational reports and bewildering excitement, the disciples met in a room in Jerusalem. Jesus had already appeared four times—to Mary Magdalene, to the other women, to Peter, and to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus—and the disciples evidently came together in the evening to compare reports and experiences in order to clear up and establish the truth, and doubtless also to engage in prayer

and praise. There was one absentee from this meeting — Thomas, and his absence cost him dearly.

1. The doors were shut for fear of the Jews. The implication is that they were securely locked to keep out these enemies, who were watching to nip the first budding of the proscribed faith. Suddenly Jesus stood in the midst of them. He appears to have entered the room without opening the doors as though his resurrection body were not subject to the ordinary limitations and laws of matter. The disciples "were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they beheld a spirit"—a further indication that there was something mysterious in the way in which he appeared amongst them. They had seen Jesus crucified and buried, and, though they had heard that he was risen, yet his visible presence was almost too much for their senses to stand, and they feared he was a spirit. "Peace be unto you," was the greeting with which Jesus allayed their fear and confirmed their faith. This was the usual Hebrew salutation, but in this instance it was no formal and empty conventionality; rather it was charged with the deepest meaning. These disciples had all forsaken Jesus and fled at his arrest, and this was the first time he had met them alone since that hour; might they not fear his displeasure? This greeting quieted any such fear. The risen Christ pronounced upon his disciples the peace of full salvation that was now wrought out and ready for their acceptance and enjoyment. Sin is the lack of harmony with God—with his laws and with his fellowship—and this throws life out of adjustment and makes it cut and grind at every point. Our personal state, our social relations and our relations with God are all disturbed and distressed through sin. The presence of the risen Christ amongst us and especially in our hearts tunes these discordant relations into harmony and peace; then life is freed from its friction

and fretting and fear, and becomes one swelling strain of music.

2. Besides being frightened, what further state of mind did these disciples disclose? They were still sceptical. They feared it was a spirit they saw, and not the risen Jesus. This shows they were not in a state of mind to be easily deceived by some illusion or hallucination. Jesus himself had to allay this fear and patiently persuade them of his reality. "He showed unto them his hands and his side." The marks were there of the wounds which they had seen in his body as it hung upon the cross and as they buried it. Probably they touched his hands to see that they were flesh and thrust their fingers into the very prints of the wounds to assure themselves of his identity. Thus these hard-headed fishermen were no enthusiasts, the victims of credulity and delusion, catching up any wild rumor, but they were themselves suspicious of deception and sceptical of the truth, and demanded the most tangible evidence and irrefragable proof. These witnesses do not give us mere reports and rumors, the second-hand testimony of what others saw, but they were eye-witnesses and tell us what they themselves saw. "That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life, that declare we unto you." "The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord." That was a logical and tremendous "therefore," the solid bridge that carried them over from fear to faith. Their doubts instantly vanished, and they were filled with unspeakable joy in the incontestable presence of their risen Lord. They were given beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. What surer and fuller and richer cup of joy can we have than to know that Jesus is risen as our

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Lord? He brings life and immortality to light. Seeing him on the other side of his empty tomb at the right hand of God, we know that this life is service that leads to our Father's house. Having this assurance we should rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

3. Jesus again pronounced upon the rejoicing disciples his benediction of peace, and then he indicated to them their mission in the world. "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." The mission of Christians is thus the mission of Christ continued. The Father sent the Son to start the great work of redeeming the world, to lay its foundation, to plant its seed. He taught saving truth, illustrated it in his own example, and gave his life as an atonement for sin. This work in its historic aspect is perfect and finished, but in its application it must be everywhere repeated and applied. The disciples had been with him that they might receive his grace and then pass it on. The gospel was first to save them, yet it was not to stop with them, but was to stream through them each one into the next man, and so on out through the world. They were to do the work of Jesus over again, and thus multiply him everywhere. The Christian is to be a duplicate of Christ. We are to teach the same truth and illustrate it in our lives and do works of healing and save others as Jesus did. The works that he did we are to do also; and greater works are we to do. The foundations that he laid are under our hands to spring into the walls of his temple in every land; the seed that he sowed is to be cultivated and multiplied and scattered and made to bloom on every shore. We are thus everywhere to spread his truth and reproduce his spirit and push his kingdom farther and deeper into the world. The resurrection joy was thus not a mere sentiment, a wave of enthusiasm that was to subside and leave no trace behind, but it was a practical motive that was to inspire work, a

mighty stream that was to make the world grow green and fruitful and to irrigate the very deserts, a star that was to be hitched to great tasks and was to pull the world up to a higher level, close to God. We have a right to rejoice in the risen Lord only as we go forth to serve him.

4. This commission given to the disciples was not a mere paper program with no power behind it, but it was accompanied with an inbreathing of spiritual energy to make it efficient. Jesus breathed on the disciples as a symbol of the gift and said unto them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever ye retain, they are retained." The disciples had been three years under the instruction of Jesus, but they were not yet ready for their work; they had received preparation, but not power; the earthly wire was in position, but now a divine current must flash from heaven. Jesus was able to impart this also and promised them that they should receive it. On the day of Pentecost this promise was fulfilled, and then the disciples preached the resurrection of Jesus with such power as turned the world upside down and gave the kingdom a mighty impulse through the ages. Clothed with this power, they were able to pronounce sins forgiven, or retained; not judicially as though they had the authority of God, but declaratively, announcing divine forgiveness on grounds of penitence and faith. The Church still has this power, and is able to assure any sinner who repents and believes that his sins are forgiven of God. The abuse of this truth in the "confessional" does not annul the truth itself. The Holy Spirit is not a gift for apostles and ministers only, but also and equally for all Christians. On the day of Pentecost "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." Preacher and people are all to be baptized and saturated with the same spirit of truth

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and trust, purity and peace and power, and then we shall all do mighty works; the Spirit shall be poured out upon all flesh, and our sons and our daughters shall prophesy, our young men shall see visions, and our old men shall dream dreams.

5. The glad news of what happened at this meeting was told to Thomas, the absent disciple. That is one way to attract others to the prayer-meeting—tell them that there “we have seen the Lord.” Why Thomas was absent on this occasion we do not know, but by being absent he missed this glad and glorious meeting with the risen Jesus; and absence from the prayer meeting may often cause us to miss more than we can know. Thomas was sceptical and declared that unless he could see the hands of the Lord and put his finger into the print of the nails and his hand into his side, he would not believe. Only the coarsest physical demonstration would convince him. Again we see how far these disciples were from being under the spell of illusion and delusion, and how hard it was to convince them of the fact of the resurrection of Jesus. A week later the disciples were again assembled, and now Thomas was with them. He was willing to know the truth and was in search for it, and such a man will surely find it. Again “Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.” Then he bade Thomas to reach forth his finger and put it in his side, and believe. It does not appear that Thomas did this; the sight of Jesus was enough. Instantly his unbelief collapsed and vanished, and in full faith and devotion he said, “My Lord and my God.” His doubt was dead, and worship filled his soul; the vision of Jesus wrought the change. Then Jesus addressed to Thomas a notable saying, “Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” The evidence that

Thomas demanded brought him a blessing; but that evidence is not available for all. If we insisted on it we would be shut up in unbelief. But other evidence is available; evidence that is less coarse, but not less convincing. We have the testimony of competent and trustworthy witnesses who did see the risen Jesus; we have converging evidences of many kinds; but, best of all, we may still have the evidence of personal fellowship with Christ; he still comes to us and abides in our hearts, and this experience of his grace is a reality which cannot be shaken. So the wide world may believe in the risen Christ, though it sees not the print of the nails; "whom not having seen, ye love"; and such love is very grateful to Christ, it fills his heart with joy, and it causes him to pronounce his blessing upon us.

## XLIX

### THE GREAT COMMISSION

But the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.—*Matthew 28:16-20.*

THE time was growing short, and the hour was come when the risen Jesus must announce his final program. A mountain in Galilee was the appointed place for the momentous utterance. The particular mountain remains undesignated; it seems to have been a familiar haunt and may have been the same height overlooking the sea at Galilee from which he preached the mountain sermon and sent its great words rolling through the ages. It was fitting that this final program of Christ should be announced on a mountain. There was no seclusiveness or mystery about it that, like a guilty secret or conspiracy, it should have been curtained off from the hearing of the world in a valley or whispered in a cave. This thing was not done in a corner; but it was done in the open, it was proclaimed from a mountain-top so that all the world could hear. And the message matched the mountain, massive and mighty in proportion and power, with its summit bathed in the blue of heaven and its base rooted deep in the earth.

1. On this mountain gathered the company of believers to hear what the risen Master had to say. There were

present the eleven disciples, and possibly others. Paul tells us that "above five hundred brethren" saw the risen Jesus at once, and this may have been the occasion. Galilee was the chief scene of his ministry where he won most of his converts, and many of these may have been present. "When they saw him, they worshipped him." They may have bowed before him, after the oriental manner, expressing their dependence and adoration. Worship is worthship, and these believers thereby declared the divine rank and worth of the risen Christ. Their faith had started with him as a man, but it now ended with him as the Son of God. The crucifixion had bordered and burdened their faith in him with doubt, but the resurrection had dissipated their doubts and transfigured him with divine glory. They saw him as the express image of the Father, and their souls went out to him in faith and fellowship, in love and obedience. The company of worshippers that crowned that mountain-top was first fruits of the great and ever growing company of those that through all ages shall crown Jesus Lord of all; and it was prophetic of the great multitude whom no man can number that shall finally stand before him in white. "But some doubted." The worship was not unanimous; human thought and action, creed and character never are. Who the doubters were, whether inside the circle of the eleven, or outside in the broader border, is not indicated, but even some of the twelve may have been involved in uncertainty as to the identity of the person of Jesus. Whatever the cause or the circumstances of this doubt, the damaging fact is boldly stated. Matthew, the writer of this gospel who was present, records the exact truth. The new faith was just starting, and there would be a strong temptation to make capital for it in every way; to color up all favorable aspects and tone down all unfavorable features; to write the gospels as campaign documents.

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But these writers do nothing of the kind: they simply tell the truth. This is characteristic of the Bible all the way through. It is not a partisan book, but an impartial history. The fact that it tells us that in the final meeting of Jesus with his disciples in Galilee, "they worshipped him: but some doubted," helps us to believe it when it tells us that holy men spake as they were moved of the Holy Ghost and that Jesus Christ rose again from the dead.

2. When a man announces his program for the world, we want to know what his credentials are, by what authority he speaks. Many men have drawn up plans for reorganizing society and reforming the world, but their little schemes have come to naught because they had no authority of wisdom in constructing them and no power to put them in operation. Almost all philosophers have dreamed dreams of social reconstruction and a golden age, but seldom have their dreams in the slightest degree affected the aspect of the world. "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth," is the tremendous affirmation with which Jesus prefaces his program. He did not set out on the enterprise of world-redemption without counting the cost and seeing that he had the means, and nothing in it shall fail which all power can accomplish. Heaven is on the side of Jesus Christ and wheels all its battalions into line under his banner. He and the Father are one, and this gives him all the authority of God: omnipotence and omniscience, the right to forgive sin, the regenerating and cleansing power of the Holy Spirit, angel messengers and all the hosts of heaven are his. The power that framed the universe and forged burning suns on the anvil of creation is at the disposal of Jesus; the constellations are his silent and eternal allies. This power flows down into and envelops the earth. The whole framework of nature is plastic and obedient

to his touch. All the streams of human energy, population and commerce, wealth and war, enterprise and adventure, invention and discovery, flow in channels that are guided and shaped or at least limited by his hand. The human mind and heart are open to the play of his truth and love. The glorified Jesus is not an indifferent spectator of the whirling panorama of this world, but he sets and moves its scenes, and with majestic dignity and sovereignty he declares, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth."

3. Since all power can do all things, we might think that Jesus would with his own hand bring immediate salvation to all the world. But this is not his method. "All authority hath been given unto me," "Go ye therefore," is the logic of the great commission. Divine power must have human means through which to work. The electricity of heaven's omnipotence must have an earthly wire along which to flash. Have you ever noticed a giant steam hammer at work? What enormous power is stored up in the boiler. The hammer, weighing possibly half a ton, shoots down like lightning and strikes a tremendous blow that crushes a great bar of steel; and then again it slips down softly and delivers the lightest tap that would not hurt a child's finger. What controls and guides it? The workman's hand on the lever. The all power of the steam and the puny power of the human hand work together in beautiful harmony. Either without the other could do nothing; but both together forge huge axles on which will roll the world's commerce, or mighty shafts and anchors that will drive ships through foaming seas and defy the fiercest storms. So the power of omnipotence is lodged in the hands of the risen and glorified Christ, but it waits for our cooperation to shoot forth in the mightiest blows of power, or to slip down in the softest accents of love. He stands back of us with his

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power, but we must go at his bidding. From the mountain-top of his ascension his disciples started forth on this mission, radiating from that centre, and they have gone on until they have everywhere reached the rim of the world.

4. On what mission were they sent? To overrun the world with armies and beat it into submission with the sword? To set up a world-empire of earthly power and splendor? No, but to "make disciples of all the nations." Already the risen Christ gives commands and makes room in his kingdom for "all the nations." Standing on that Galilean mountain-top he was looking out over the whole world. Jesus was no provincial Jew or parochial philosopher, but he stood in universal relations and was master of all men. "Make disciples of all the nations," he calmly said, foreseeing that all the world should be attracted by his truth and love and by the power of his personality into his kingdom. Christianity is no national or racial religion, it refuses to stop at any mountain range, or ocean shore, or political line, but it is a universal faith that like the atmosphere must flow over all boundaries and obstructions and envelop the whole earth. With this command committed to us we should not shut the gospel up in our own lives and land, but give it wings and send it over all lands and seas. The nations are to be baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. This is the germ of a baptismal formula into the name of the blessed trinity. Baptism symbolizes saturating power, and the nations are thus to be filled with the Spirit of the triune God. The nations are also to be taught to observe all the teachings of Jesus. Conversion is not the end of the Christianizing process, but only its beginning. After men have confessed Christ they must still be taught and trained in Christian doctrine and practice, and all life is a Christian school. The

groundwork of this teaching is all things whatsoever Christ commanded us. It is true that the Christian may and should gather and use truth from all fields; all things are his. But Christ laid the foundation of principles on which our superstructure is to be built, he sowed the seeds that are to germinate and bloom into all our harvests. His teaching is broad and deep enough to bear up all we can build upon it; his sayings contain the seeds of all our modern life and of life yet more abundant and everlasting.

5. What is the connection between the divine power of Christ in heaven and the human weakness of his disciples on earth? Is he so remote and separated from them that his power is unavailable and useless to them? Christ did not leave a missing link, a break in the connection, at this point. "And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Jesus in his human presence in the world was limited to one place. On this account it was expedient for his disciples that he should go away into the spiritual world from which he could come in the person of the Paraclete or Comforter, who, he said, "shall teach you all things." Christ in his Spirit is now present in all the world, but has special access to and power in the sympathetic minds and hearts of his disciples. Through his Word in which we can read and study and meditate upon his thoughts, through prayer and communion, through faith and obedience, we can hold fellowship with him and be filled with his mind and be strengthened with his might; and thus he is with us as really as and more vitally than he was with his disciples in Galilee. Sustained by his presence apostles went everywhere preaching his resurrection and sealed their testimony with their blood; martyrs stepped into the flames; and missionaries are yet declaring his gospel to all the nations. Conscious of his presence in our hearts,

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whom having not seen we love, we also are bound to him by a tie that cannot be broken; that strengthens us with might by his Spirit in the inner man; and that will give us the victory that overcomes the world. Such was the final program of Jesus; and it corresponds with the course of history and fits this far-off century in a way that shows he was indulging in no empty dream, speaking no random guesses, but was legislating for the ages in these weighty words. This grand utterance bears the impress of his divinity and proclaims him to be the master of the world.

# L

## THE ASCENSION

And he led them out until *they were* over against Bethany: and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, blessing God.—*Luke 24:50-53.*

“A cloud received him out of their sight.”

WE have come to the closing scene; and it is worthy of its place as the conclusion and climax of this wonderful Life. Had the Gospel been an invented story, it would have been a hard matter to know how to bring it to an end. Christ was risen and his work was finished: what shall be done with him? He must not be permitted to die again, and he cannot remain. The critical point in a story is the conclusion. It must keep up the interest to the end and close at the highest point, or it breaks down and fails. How shall this Life, that opened with angel minstrelsy in the skies and was attended with many wonderful works and has just emerged from the tomb and been crowned with the wonder and glory of the resurrection, be brought to an appropriate conclusion? What poet or painter would dare attempt the task? But give the pen to one of these humble followers of Jesus and he will write a conclusion that is the fitting climax of the whole story, and that, viewed simply as a piece of literature and work of art, is one of the most beautiful things in all the books of the world. How simple and natural it is, how free from all art and effort, affectation and self-consciousness, how

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true to life. The man that wrote the story of the ascension of Jesus, we feel, did not invent it and never thought of inventing anything. Nobody invented it, it was a fact, the disciples simply recorded it, and here it is. Let us study the ascension itself.

I. "He led them out until they were over against Bethany." We can see the little company emerging from the eastern gate of Jerusalem, perhaps on a bright May morning when, instead of the darkness that attended the crucifixion, all nature was clad in fresh colors and seemed to sing with gladness. They descend into the valley of Kedron, wend their way up over Mount Olivet and down its eastern slope as far as to Bethany, all the way talking earnestly concerning the Kingdom and the disciples probably all unconscious of what was coming. Why to Bethany? Every step of the way was crowded with sacred associations. In ascending Olivet they passed by Gethsemane, where Jesus fought the real battle of the cross. At the summit they stood at the spot where he first saw Jerusalem in his triumphal entry and wept over the city. And Bethany was dear to him by many ties. There was the house of Martha and Mary, where he had so often dwelt and rested. There he had raised Lazarus from the grave. More than any other spot in the world, it was home to him. No wonder his feet found their way to this place when he was about to take his farewell look at earth. We all want to come home to die. Where we first saw the light, there let the final rush of darkness come. Jesus was human to the last. Why did he lead them out only as far as to Bethany? Why did he not lead them all the way and remain with his disciples through all the generations, in every land working miracles and speaking as never man spake, until the kingdoms of this world are his? Ought not he above all others to stay until the end? Yet he was the first to go.

He led them out as far as to Bethany and there he left them. How can we explain this? Jesus himself explained it. "It is expedient for you that I go away." Mark that it was not expedient for himself that he should go away. It was no cowardly desertion of his post of duty that took him out of the world. But it was expedient for the disciples that he should go: he could lead them from his throne better than he could on earth. The place for the captain of a steamship is up on the bridge, not down at the wheel or in the engine room. Lincoln could do more for his generals and soldiers in Washington than he could have done for them on the field. The ascension of Jesus was the crowning act in his work, for it put him in the right place and enthroned him over all the world. "He led them until they were over against Bethany." This is the way God is always leading us. He leads us part of the way and then leaves us to ourselves. He leads us out as far as the Bible. The Bible throws light upon the path of life and yet it is never a complete guide-book. It gives us general principles, but hardly ever tells us what to do next. Why did not God give us a book containing minute directions for every step in life? Because, to say nothing of the impossibility of such a book, he means to leave something for us to do. He leads us out as far as to Bethany, and then we must find our own path. God's guidance assumes on our part common sense, a prayerful mind and an obedient will. If we go with Jesus as far as to Bethany, we shall find the rest of the way.

2. "And he lifted up his hands and *blessed* them." That is what he had been doing all his life long. He blessed the blind when he touched their eyes into sight, the hungry when he fed them, the penitent when he forgave them and the sorrowing when he comforted them. There are smitings and cursings

enough in the world ; let the holy hands of the Son of God be lifted upon it in blessing and in time its noisy strife and wickedness shall be stilled into peace. May our hands never be lifted to strike or defraud, but be lifted only to bless, to do deeds of justice and kindness and love. This blessing was Christ's farewell to his disciples. Parting words are notably pathetic words. At such a time language means more. Common words have in them a strange thrill of life. Single syllables cut deep into the heart and leave their impress forever. All our words should be words of blessing, for we never know when the words we are speaking may be our last utterance. Sometime the farewell must come and the last word be spoken. May we so live in faithfulness and love with one another that at the last hour there shall be no bitterness in our words, no regrets to express, but that while we are speaking words of blessing we shall be parted.

3. "And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven." He came under the attraction of a higher gravitation, and instead of being bound to this little earth he rose into the clouds and floated off amongst other worlds. What possibilities are involved in this for our glorified bodies we do not know and need not speculate. It may not mean anything for us, and it may mean winged bodies with unknown powers of levitation that can speed as a beam of light through all the boundless fields of space. A cloud received him out of sight: but only out of sight, not out of guidance, sympathy, fellowship, power. We do not need to see a person in order to know, love and serve him. There may be the fullest fellowship and affection and cooperation between kindred spirits who have never seen each other and between whom lie uncounted miles. "Because thou hast seen me," said

Jesus, "thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." "Whom having not seen, we love." Jesus is out of sight now, but one day we shall see him as he is. He was "carried up into heaven." His whole life had been an ascent. He ever grew in heavenly life and loveliness. His very cross only lifted him to a higher point of glory, closer to God. He could climb no higher on this earth. It was perfectly natural, then, that he should be carried up into heaven; he simply went to his own place, back to his native country. Should not life with us be a gradual but constant ascent? on a higher level in its wisdom and faithfulness and service to-day than it was yesterday? Every duty well done lifts us to a loftier summit. Our very temptations and trials, obstructions and burdens, may be made stepping stones on which to rise to higher things. It is possible to live ever moving upward in aspiration and attainment until one more step will surely take us into heaven. Heaven is the natural completion and crown of such a life, and we cannot think of anything else as its end. The soul that has been purified from sin in death rises into the beatific life of God; the soul that in death is saturated with sin, sinks. Every one shall go to his own place. We may choose this place now. Let us so live that when we die men will not think we have gone down, but shall know we have been carried up.

4. "And they worshipped him." They had reason to worship him before, but not that reason that works final conviction, faith that never doubts. After the resurrection and ascension these humble disciples knew that their meek and lowly Friend was indeed the Son of God, and their souls went upward to him in worship, and now rather than deny or doubt him they were ready to die. The reasons that led the disciples to worship Jesus Christ have come down through the centuries with in-

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creasing force to us. What shall we do in the presence of that Life and of this mysterious Person? Only one word is great enough to express it: worship! Crown him Lord of all! Worship is the greatest thing man can do. It is this that makes him more than a sheep. This is the highest exercise of his highest powers. This is the golden cable which binds him to a higher life and another world, by which he casts his anchor within the veil. That life is poor that does not worship. However rich and strong it may be in all the outward things of this world, it has no bread for the soul. Worship satisfies our greatest needs and blesses life from top to bottom. It is not a priestly invention, but is native to man, the original root of divinity in him, and the purer and richer is the human heart the finer will this blossom bloom. We need worship just as we need bread and air and sunshine. If we do not worship, some part of our nature is starving to death; and it is the highest and best part. "O come, let us worship and bow down." And the place for us to worship is at the feet of Jesus.

5. "And returned to Jerusalem with great joy." They wanted to stay. There they stood gazing intently into the upper air at the point where Jesus had vanished as though they expected him presently to reappear. But while they looked, two white-apparelled angels stood by them and said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? This Jesus, which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven" (Acts 9:11). So we are living between two visits of Jesus Christ to this world. He has come and gone and will come again. But in the meantime we are not to stand gazing up into heaven. The spot where the disciples saw Jesus vanish was a place of enchantment to them, but they were not allowed to stay there; and so they returned to Jerusalem,

they went back to their work. There are rare days in life which we are permitted to spend on the mountain-top, but we cannot always live at that high altitude and must come down to the average level and live many common days. From our worship we must return to our work. The Christian is to be a practical man who, having worshipped Jesus on the mountain, goes back to the world to make it better. They returned to Jerusalem, however, with great joy. Where did they find this joy? Not in Jerusalem, for the apostate city now had only sad memories for them and stood frowning upon them, like a sleeping volcano, all ready to break out against them in fiery persecution. Their joy was not in that city, but in themselves; in their faith in and devotion to their ascended Lord; in their sense of his presence with them and their thoughts of service in his Kingdom. The first note of the gospel the angels struck was joy, and now the gospel story closes with the same word. Through all these years it has never lost the key-note. We have never got the real music of the gospel in our hearts until we have its joy. If we are filled with the spirit of Christ, it makes no difference where we live or what we do, we can return to our appointed place with great joy. The last scene in the life of Jesus, as the first, is thus set in a framework of joy; and this is prophetic of that golden age of gladness when the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; and it shall receive its final fulfillment when all the ransomed of the Lord shall return to the new Jerusalem with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

*O Master, we have followed thy steps from thy cradle to thy cross and ascension and have seen the beauty of thy perfect human life and the splendor of thy divine glory. We would now live this same life and grow into thy likeness. Thou knowest how infirm is our purpose and how our faith grows faint. Often we follow thee afar off and lose the vision of thy presence. Walk by our side and tell us thy secret. Inspire us by thy Spirit and help us to make our wills thine. We would do these same works of mercy and touch the world with healing hands. Make us living gospels so that our very presence shall be a benediction. Impart unto us thy purity and patience and peace. We would be strong and brave to resist temptation and to bear the cross. Go with us into our Gethsemane and sustain us in trial and comfort us in sorrow. In the darkest night may we see the shining of thy light. Teach us thy way and lead us in a plain path. And when our education in the school of earthly discipleship is complete send for us to come home. May we then enter in through the gates into the city and come to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to thee. Amen.*

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